CHAPTER 2

Sadly, chapters 2 and 3 are not given the same attention that other chapters are given in the Revelation. People look for and expect the mysterious from the Revelation. Honestly, chapters 2 and 3 don’t have a lot of that. However, there are some great truths to learn especially for the church leader.

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks

1 Unto the angel of the church is a very important point in and of itself. As already stated, the angels of Revelation 2 and 3 (and throughout the Revelation) refer to the leaders of the churches (see 1:20). The churches to which Jesus spoke and walked in the midst have, what He addressed and described as, angels. All seven letters to the seven churches begin with this phrase (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).

To each church, the letter is specifically to the angel of… The word used for angel is the Greek word angelo\s meaning “messenger.” Tracing it to its root word ago we find it means “to lead; bring; drive; go; induce.” The angel is, first, a messenger. Also, the angel is one who can lead, bring, drive, go, and induce people. The angel is a major authority in the church responsible for the church. This position of the angel is an aspect of the churches of which the Son walks in the midst.

The New Testament church in the days of the apostles was structured. “All things” were to “be done decently and in order” (1Co 14:40). The churches were constructed of “apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Eph 4:11). Members were expected to function as a “body fitly joined together and compacted.” Every member was a joint and “every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part” (Eph 4:16).

This is the structure of the first-century local church and it is toward the proper working of this structure to which these letters pertained. It is toward the proper working that the Lord addressed the individual angel of each assembly to correct some specific situation(s).

In the previous definition of an angel, we come to the conclusion that the angels of Revelation are not necessarily beings with wings, feathers, etc. These angels were not “far away” beings. The angel was not an invisible being. These angels in Revelation were not what we imagine an angel to be. What this angel would be is the man or woman of God, who leads the local assembly. Notice that each church in Revelation 2 and 3 has its own angel. All churches in which the Lord walks in the midst have an angel.

These first-century churches would have far less problems (if any) interpreting John’s message than we experience today. Using an example from John 19:18 to show this, we read, “Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” That is all John said about the actual intricacies of crucifixion. He does not explain Christ being nailed to the cross. He does not explain the suffocation experienced, which brought on the death of the victim. He does not explain the vinegar and gall. The reason is John is writing to people who know about crucifixion. They understood what happened at a crucifixion. They had witnessed crucifixions. All John needed to say was, “Where they crucified him.” The first-century readers of St. John knew exactly what John was saying. So it is here in the Revelation.

Another point we realize is the effect upon us of the present and most-used interpretation of this chapter(s). As explained in the introduction, there are five major approaches to interpreting the Revelation: Preterist approach, Historical approach, Presentist approach, Allegorical approach, and the one used most today, the Futuristic approach. The Futuristic approach says that though the seven churches were literal, John is actually speaking of seven church ages or eras to come.

Tenney writes concerning this:
The Stone Cometh

“For the futurists the letters to the churches represent successive periods of church history, beginning with Ephesus, the apostolic church, and continuing with Smyrna, the martyr church, Pergamum, the worldly church, Thyatira the apostate church, Sardis, the church of the Reformation, Philadelphia, the live church, and Laodicea, the lukewarm church... Their significance did not cease with the end of the apostolic age, for they are seven different types of churches that may be found in any period of the world’s history since Pentecost.”

The futurist interprets chapters 2 and 3 as time from Pentecost until the “rapture.” The Lord will then remove His church from the earth and, for seven years, inflict those things recorded in chapters 4 through 16 upon the earth. Each “church age” or era (Ephesus through Laodicea) is a specific time moving toward the events in chapter 4, with Laodicea being the final church age. A major problem the futurists experience is each church generation (era) thinks and teaches that it is the Laodicea generation. This speaks very poorly of how the church has viewed itself since that teaching emerged.

The comments of Finis Jennings Dake are interesting especially knowing that he was a dispensationalist. Nonetheless, he wrote,

“The dispensational application of these church letters; i.e., that they portray seven church periods or phases of church history is really based upon human theory alone. There can be no Scripture produced to prove this theory in any one aspect. Similarity to certain phases of church history proves nothing.”

Dake went on to attack this form of theology. Then after a harsh rebuke of this thinking, Dake contradicted himself and said,

“With the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2:1-3:22), we end all the book which concerns the churches of earth. From Rev. 4:1 on, the Revelation concerns things which will happen after the rapture of the Church.”

One continuous aspect of the futurists’ doctrines concerning the different church times is they cannot agree when each church age or era was. When their own personal writings and teachings are viewed, they contradict themselves (as above). All that have ever believed the “church-age doctrine,” think their

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1 Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, page 141
2 Dake, *Revelation Expounded*, page 36
3 Dake, *Revelation Expounded*, page 37
4 Chilton, *The Days Of Vengeance*, page 93
The Stone Cometh

thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Revelation 2:3 And hath borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

2 The commendation for this church was excellent. The Lord said I know thy works, thy labour, thy patience. The topic of works is discussed to all seven churches and to each angel. The Lord had full knowledge of what both the church and the angel had done.

The commendation continued. The Lord said, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. One of the good works of the Ephesian church is it would not bear (literally “to lift”) evil or false apostles. The Lord said the angel and/or church tried them that said they were apostles and found them liars. Tried means “to test” and is translated that way in modern versions. An aspect of a true angel and a true church is to test those who say they are ministry and identify the liars. There is a test to pass. We are not told exactly how they tested those who said they were apostles. We note that charlatans and impostors existed in the first-century church. To think they do not exist today would be foolish. A church and angel should test ministry. This is pleasing to the Lord.

This testing was obviously a very well known fact among the churches concerning Ephesus. Ignatius writing in the first century wrote,

“And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that ye all live according to the truth, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor, indeed, do ye hearken to anyone rather than to Jesus Christ speaking in truth.”

This epistle of Ignatius is filled with such statements.

“Nevertheless, I have heard of some who have passed in among you, holding the wicked doctrine of the strange and evil spirit; to whom ye did not allow entrance to sow their tares, but stopped your ears that ye might not receive that error which was proclaimed by them, as being persuaded that that spirit which deceives the people does not speak the things of Christ.”

5 Ignatius, The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter 6

6 Ignatius, The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, chapter 9

The Revelation Of Jesus Christ Chapter 2

Not only did the Lord know the good works of Ephesus, but others knew them as well.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

4 The Lord said, Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee. Note that the Lord had something against a valid church, a church that the Apostle Paul began. Can the Lord have something against a place where the best of ministry ministered (Paul, Timothy, John)? This is exactly what the Son of man said. I have somewhat against thee.

The condemnation was focused on one point. Thou hast left thy first love. The word left means “send forth, quit, forsake.” The church was birthed with a love to war against worship of pagan deities and witchcraft (Acts 19). The church simply left the passion it had at the first. It was that love and passion that affected its city and region.

This is a position that any and all churches slip into. A church begins with zeal to make an impact, and often does at its conception. The people “love” being a church, love defeating the enemy, love Jesus and love one another. One day we look around and that wonderful zeal and excitement everyone was experiencing has been replaced by church routine. We find tiny, insignificant, un-eternal matters have whittled away at the zeal. People fall back, and enthusiasm is no longer found. This falling back into church routine is slow and hardly noticeable. Yet, it happens to every church, because it happens to every individual. It is human nature. It will be well worth the time to investigate how the Lord Jesus, the Son of man, instructs the angel to correct the problem at Ephesus.

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

5 William Ramsey writes,

“...the evil in Ephesus was curable. The loss of enthusiasm which affected that Church was different in kind from the luke-warmness that affected Laodicea, and should be treated in a different way. The half-heartedness of the Laodiceans was deadly, and those who were so affected were hopeless... But the cooling of the first Ephesian enthusiasm was a failing that lies in human nature. The failing can be
First, we must realize and admit that this is a fallen state, but curable. We probably do not recognize that the loss of zeal and love for church is a fallen position. However the Lord, the Son of man, says that it is. Usually approaching people in a local assembly and telling them something like, “Now listen, you are missing a lot of meetings and ministry. You are getting weak and negative. You need to get back into the swing,” will cause them to become defensive. Inevitably they reply something like this: “Really? Do you think so? I don’t think that is happening to me. I’m fine.”

We recognize this fallen position can and does happen to others, but refuse to think it is happening to us personally. We don’t want to admit that we have fallen from where we should be and have been. We are spiritual, we think. We want to appear spiritual and healthy when, in truth, we have fallen. The first step the Lord takes to help this unenthusiastic church is to show them their fallen state.

Jesus said to repent. The word repent does not mean come to the altar and cry. It simply means “to think differently.” Repentance is simply adjusting one’s thinking to receive truth. This would mean that this Ephesian church, which once thought correctly, was now thinking incorrectly and needed to repent.

An angel or a church sometimes needs to repent. It is difficult for a church leader to admit that he or she has been thinking incorrectly concerning the direction of a church. However, the reason the church needed to repent was because the angel needed to repent. This gave the people the need to repent. The thinking process of the people is definitely linked to and a part of the angel’s responsibility. The people cannot think correctly if the leader(s) does not think correctly. If the angel is not excited and enthusiastic, the people will not be excited and enthusiastic.

Once realized that the thinking is incorrect and that the enthusiasm has depleted, the Lord said, do… something about it. This is curable and only requires “repentance,” and admitting that we have fallen from where we once were. This is the way the Lord handles an individual or a church that has left the first love.

The condemnation is followed with a very strong or else. The Lord Jesus, the Son of man said, I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. The Lord is not threatening the church at Ephesus with His second advent (coming). No one would even think that. Yet, He said He would come. What He is saying is that He will come against them and remove their candlestick (do not miss this part) out of his place. As we have seen, the candlestick is the church itself.

For one to assume that the Lord will not terminate a work called a church is a foolish assumption. However, the way this is done does not necessarily mean by destruction, but rather by moving.

“The interpretation of Grotius comes near the truth: ‘I will cause thy population to flee away to a other place.’”

How accurate that statement! When there is no enthusiasm at a local church, people will naturally become disgruntled and begin looking around for a place where there is excitement.

I heard a preacher say once concerning a church he had been asked to pastor. The church had been in existence for many years and now was on the verge of extinction. All the people had left. He told the remaining people what must happen if he were to assume the pastoral position of that church. He said the people must repent concerning their giving and repent concerning their “love” toward people. The people said if they did begin giving as the pastor wanted that the church would shut down. He told them if that happened it would be the very best thing that could happen, because, as it was, that church was a cancer sore in the body of Christ. Its death would actually be an asset to the church universal. The church did repent and made an impact on its area. This approach may sound harsh, but that angel (messenger) to that church gave the message that was given him. Repent or else!

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7 Sir William Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, page 197

8 Sir William Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, page 197
The Stone Cometh

In Sir William Ramsey’s book, *The Letters To The Seven Churches*, he details how the literal land was in constant change at Ephesus. The harbor became a marsh as it filled with silt. The people began to move away, and today the city is but an archeology site. The candlestick was indeed removed.

Revelation 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

6 Interestingly, the Lord does and can hate. The Lord hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. We have some information about the Nicolaitanes.

“The Nicolaitans are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles [Acts 6:5]. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

InActs 6:5 a man named Nicolas was named, along with Stephen and Philip, as those selected to serve the tables. Those were appointed by the apostles. According to history, this Nicolas became a heretic, teaching that anything and everything was acceptable to the Lord. Of these types of deeds being taught, the Lord said, “I hate them.”

Do notice that the Son of man hates the deeds, not the people.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

7 Lastly, to each church that he wrote will come the challenge to those who hath an ear. The Son of man says, “…let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Every church will receive a challenge to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To every church in each letter, the challenge of what the Spirit was saying dealt with him that overcometh. Although the messages to the churches are different to every church and different to every angel, the Spirit is issuing one basic command – Overcome! The Son of man, Jesus Christ, is charging His church to overcome those who seek to overcome her.

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9 Sir William Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, page 197, 198

10 St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, i.xxvi.3

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The Revelation Of Jesus Christ Chapter 2

Satan’s opposition to the churches will appear in various forms, and different churches will have different issues to face, thus, different enemies to overcome. But no matter what the particular problems facing it, each church is under divine mandate to conquer and completely overwhelm its opposition.

The Lord says, “To him that overcometh will I give…” Being an overcomer is not the duty of a select few “Super-Christians.” All Christians are overcomers! A Christian is an overcomer. The mark of a Christian is one who has overcome. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). If a person is truly “born of God,” that person will overcome! He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith.

Almost all the challenges in all seven letters refer to the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem given in detail at the close of Revelation. The reward for those at Ephesus was I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. The paradise of God is an allusion to the Garden of Eden, where man was expelled because of not overcoming. Of course, the garden (paradise) is marked by the tree of life which is now in the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:2, 14). The overcomer may eat of the tree of life now. Isn’t that interesting?

Eating of the tree of life is not for the consummation of time only. It is for the overcomer now. I may eat of the tree of life today, if I will overcome.

We have separated the letters into four distinct divisions. There is the “character of Christ,” the “commendation,” the “condemnation,” and finally the “challenge.” Each letter will be broken down into these four sections. This will aid us in grasping the truth of each letter.

Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

8 Again the letter to Smyrna is first addressed to

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11 Chilton, *The Days Of Vengeance*, page 99
the angel, who was to read it to the church at Smyrna (see comments 1:3). Smyrna, like Ephesus, was and is a seaport city. Smyrna is a very old city dating back to 1000 B.C. It was old, and most old cities are not pretty. They are dilapidated and crumbling. However, Smyrna was a very beautiful city. It suffered frequent earthquakes, but rather than destroying Smyrna, it caused the people to rebuild the old city each time to a new splendor. The inhabitants of Smyrna boasted of its beauty. “Municipal rivalry and local pride were keen and strong in ancient times.”

Smyrna exists today as a large, commercial port through which trade enters Asia.

Smyrna had two major enemies as far as Christianity was concerned. The people of the city were very devoted to Emperor worship. As early as 195 B.C. Smyrna built a temple and instituted worship of Rome, which was a proclamation of uncompromising adherence to the cause of Rome. In this alliance, the city took great pride. Secondly, Smyrna had a large population of Jews who hated the Christian faith. Between these two enemies, the church at Smyrna suffered great persecution.

To that persecuted church the Lord, the Son of man, identifies Himself as the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. This is an allusion quotation taken from Isaiah 44:6 (and 48:12). The context of these verses identified Jesus as the supreme Lord and Determiner of history, the Planner and Controller of all reality. Not only is He in control of and the determiner of all history, He is also the one who was dead, and is alive. Jesus Christ, the Son of man, plans history and is victorious even over death. The same One who rose from the dead in victory is the first and the last! There is no mistake of His identity. He is the Christ. He is Jesus. He is the Son of man.

Also, the citizens of Smyrna would recognize that, through earthquakes and wars, their city lived and became even more alive and beautiful with every death it went through.

12 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 211

13 Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, page 100

The Lord knew their works. Works is a topic that the Son of Man will discuss with every church. Every angel must teach its congregation a “works doctrine.” Works would be what the people had accomplished after entering the kingdom (Col 1:13). Works mean nothing until we enter the kingdom. No one will ever be saved by works (Eph 2:8). Entrance into the kingdom is not by works. There is the B.C. and A. D. aspect of the individual to works. Works cannot save a person, but after being translated into the kingdom (Col 1:13), a person is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph 2:8-10). The Son of man investigates the entire works of every church. After entrance into the family and kingdom of God, works become vital (Rev 20:11-15; Eph 2:10; Tit 3:8). The Lord does notice the works of the angel and the local church.

The Lord also knew their tribulation! However, the Lord did not “rapture” them out of tribulation, nor did He remove their poverty. He did commend them for being faithful through both their tribulation and poverty. It becomes important to understand that Jesus will not rapture us out of every tribulation. Tribulation is a growth process. It shows of what we’re made to those around. We may deceive some of the people some of the time and all of the people some of the time, but when tribulation comes, people will see what is truly inside.

This letter differs from the previous letter to Ephesus in both content and tone. These Smyrna Christians proved that faith works and is not only for excitement as at Ephesus, but is for tribulation and poverty as well. Both tribulation and poverty play havoc upon any church. People become disillusioned when they go through difficult times. They question God and can become unfaithful in their walk. That was not the case with Smyrna for in their lean times the Lord said, “…but thou are rich.”

Notice here what the Lord said. I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.
Judaism is the obvious link to the synagogue of Satan. In the mind of the Son of man, a Jew who rejected the Messiah and persecuted those who received Jesus as Messiah was of the synagogue of Satan. This is vital in the interpretation of the Revelation.

Those Jews who rejected the Christ claimed to be the people of God, but in reality those were of the synagogue of Satan. This point is crucial to grasp. Judaism is no longer an acceptable religion! It rejected Jesus Christ to the point of crucifying Him, and now the Son of man says they are of the synagogue of Satan! Judaism obeyed Satan rather than the Lord God.

The Jewish synagogue(s) in Smyrna was in opposition to the Christian Church. The Jews provoked the Roman government to persecute the saints. In The Martyrdom of Polycarp, the active hatred of Christians is recorded. Polycarp, a church father, was martyred in this Smyrna. The Jews literally brought fuel (wood) of a Saturday [Sabbath] to burn him in the Stadium publicly. As the Jews crucified the Christ, they also martyred the saints. The Jewish religion of Judaism was the synagogue of Satan to Jesus.

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

10 What does the Lord mean when He says, “Fear none of those thing which thou shalt suffer?” Suffer? Do Christians suffer? Soon some of the Smyrna Christians would be cast into prison and shall have tribulation (not rapture).

Interestingly, this is what pleased the Lord about this church. Not that they would be cast into prison, but that experience would not topple their faith. Their faith was real, and it worked through tribulation.

As we stand before the Christ with those who have been sawed asunder, crucified, crucified upside down, fed to beasts, burned as Roman candles, used as targets for gladiators, and on and on, how will we feel about our little times of tribulation?

Christians today do not understand that our faith must be tried. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:7).

To the angel of the church at Smyrna, the Lord warns that He would allow or use the devil to cast some into prison. Why would these Christians be cast into prison? That ye may be tried. Be thou faithful unto death. Prison? Trial? Death? Samuel Rutherford wrote,

“The devil is but God’s master fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons.”

For those who can and will be faithful unto death, Jesus the Son of man will give thee a crown of life!

The test of ten days is an allusion to Daniel 1:11-21, after which Daniel was awarded a crown of life. The test for ten days is nothing compared to the reward of eternity. When in the test, it seems as though the test will never end. We forget that the test will end shortly. Tests are for a short time, only ten days.

Being faithful through tests and even being faithful unto death is not only for “super saints.” The only type of saint the Bible recognizes is the saint that is faithful unto death. It is like the overcomer. An overcomer is not a super saint. The only kind of Christian is an overcomer (see discussion 2:7). If I am a Christian born of God, then I am an overcomer (1Jo 5:4). If I am born of God, then I overcome. Likewise, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Mat 10:22). We must endure, we must! To reign with Him, we must endure. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

11 The challenge is given, as always, to him that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit saith. If a


15 The Letters of Samuel Rutherford, Frank E. Gaebelain, page 219
The person hears judgmentalism and hardness and condemnation about being on trial and experiencing tribulation, that person will miss what the Spirit saith. The reward is only to the overcomer. A caution was sent to all who think this is not the case. Avoiding the second death is not by expressing faith in a “sinner’s prayer,” but in overcoming. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. To the church at Smyrna, they must overcome and be faithful unto the death.

Ramsey says concerning Smyrna, “In this letter no one can fail to recognize the tone of affection and entire approval. Whereas the writer urged the people of Ephesus to be as they once were, he counsels the Smyrnaeans to continue as they are now. Ephesus has to recover what it has lost, but Smyrna has lost nothing. The persecution and poverty which had been the lot of this Church from the beginning, and which would still continue for a period, kept it pure. There was nothing in it to tempt the unworthy or the half-hearted.”

To Smyrna, the Son of man placed the price at the door, and in His way said, “If you want in, this is what it will cost – faithfulness unto death!”

Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges:

12 The church at the city of Pergamos is now addressed. It is actually “Pergamum,” but the spelling here is “Pergamos.” Pergamos was one of the most ancient of cities. It reaches back to the beginning of life in Asia and was a very important Asian city. Pergamos was the official capital of the province. Thus, it was the seat of authority for the Roman government in this area of Asia. It, too, participated in heavy, pagan worship and boasted of its worship of Caesar. Within the city was a cult that worshipped Asklepios a serpent-god, who, for the city, was called Savior. It is to this city the Son of man said, “...saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” This statement would be aimed at both Caesar and Asklepios worship. All authority belonged to Jesus Christ (Mat 28:18). The Son of man possessed the sharp sword. This is the character reference to the portrait in 1:16 of the sword that came out of His mouth. It is His word, His gospel, that has destroyed and will destroy Satan's seat (literally throne), not only in Pergamos, but in the whole earth.

Revelation 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

13 The Lord’s commendation began as He again says, I know thy works. The word works is used 11 times in chapters 2 and 3 (2:2, 5, 9, 13, 19, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15). The phrase I know thy works was spoken to every church.

Obviously, the Lord desired to make it clear that He personally observes works. A church is expected to work. Remember the letters are addressed to the angel, and then it is always said, “Let the church hear.” The letters were read to the congregation to hear. Every church should ask, “What is the work set and established for this church to do?” The congregation / church has a work. Thus each individual has a work. The Lord said, I know thy works (plural).

The Lord also said I know... where thou dwellest. The Lord does have our addresses. The context is He is very aware of the principality His churches must dwell in, even where Satan's seat is.

Many ideas have been given by expositors over the centuries as to what exactly the Lord was referring by seat. Everything has been suggested from the way the mountain appeared upon which Pergamos sat, to the altar of Zeus. Naturally, the cult of Asklepios has been used. Regardless of suggestions about the seat, Satan has already been identified by the Lord and recorded by John in Revelation 2:9. There the Lord attached Satan to the synagogue of the Jews. “....I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

The greatest enemy of the church in the first century was Judaism. It provoked Pilate to crucify Christ. It provoked Rome to martyr Christians by the thousands. The religion of Judaism was where Satan dwelleth.

Satan was seen as, or in, the Jewish religion by the Son of man. Interestingly here in 2:13, it is not

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16 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 225
Satan that is emphasized, but rather Satan’s seat. If Satan was in the Jewish religion, then Judaism was sitting on the seat of the Roman Empire. This is exactly what will be shown in chapter 17 as we see the great whore sitting upon the beast that will eventually devour her.

The resistance Jesus Christ experienced as He brought His gospel of the kingdom message was Judaism. The resistance the apostles experienced was Judaism. Judaism stoned, crucified, and fought the message of the apostles.

The Lord said thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. We note the link of Pergamos to Smyrna. Both were holding fast even in the midst of persecution and martyrdom. The death of Antipas was undoubtedly one staged by the Jews and Romans, intending to turn the faith of the believers. However, it failed. The believers held fast the name of Jesus. They did not deny the faith even in those days when Antipas was slain. The use of the word slain points out the violence of this death. Yet, the church held fast.

Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

14, 15 The Lord had a condemnation for Pergamos. In fact, He had a few things against that church. These things included allowing and receiving some erroneous teaching in the church. The angel had allowed heresy.

The doctrine of Balaam is found in Numbers chapters 22-25. It goes like this. When Balak could not prevail against the nation of Israel, Balaam taught Balak to defeat Israel with corruption. Numbers 31:16 records, “Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.” Satan’s plan was and is to corrupt the church and bring false teaching, or what the Bible calls false teaching. This hatred of false doctrine was also within the Apostles John. Ramsey goes on to say concerning

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**The Revelation Of Jesus Christ Chapter 2**

**Doctrine.** These doctrines cause the church to commit trespass against the Lord. This should make us be very careful of what we are taught today. We have been taught some wrong stuff.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is also that doctrine of Balaam. The Lord says So hast thou also them. This false doctrine holds that because the church was not under the law, people could do anything in excess. They taught people to commit fornication. They taught the doctrine of excess—to eat things sacrificed unto idols. Notice what the Lord said about such doctrine. He said, “...which thing I hate.”

This Nicolaitanes teaching was obviously a tremendous heresy in the first-century church. It has already been mentioned in the letter to Ephesus (2:6). The shining jewel of the Ephesian church and the boast of the angel at Ephesus was their rejection of false doctrines and false apostles, including this Nicolaitanes’ heresy.

False doctrine was a problem at Pergamos. Some at Pergamos were receiving it. The doctrine seemed to have also embedded at Thyatira, as we will see. This was the same doctrine that Jezebel taught. Because of the additional information given in the letter to Thyatira, we will study that doctrine then.

At this point, some of the comments by William Ramsey seem enlightening and necessary.

“This school of thought [Nicolaitanes] and conduct played an important part in the Church of the first century... The character of this movement obscure and almost unknown to us, because the questions which it raised were determined at so early a date... it was evidently an attempt to effect a reasonable compromise with the established usages of Graeco-Roman society and to retain as many as possible of those usages in the Christian system of life. It affected most of all the cultured and well-to-do classes in the Church.”

Ramsey believes that the Nicolaitanes’ doctrine was a diluted gospel, which made Christianity desirable for the rich and famous. It was a “Christianity” of compromise, of which the Lord has already said to Ephesus and now says again, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes is a thing I hate.

This hatred of false doctrine was also within the Apostle John. Ramsey goes on to say concerning

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17 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 241
The Stone Cometh

John,

"...he divided all Christians into two categories, those who were right and those who were wrong. Those who were wrong he hated with his whole heart and soul; and he almost loved the Ephesians, as we have seen, because: they also hated the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans were to him almost worse than the open and declared enemies of Christ on the pagan side; and he would probably have entirely denied them the name of Christians."

To emphasize the danger of the false doctrine, the Lord compares the church at Smyrna to the Israelites in the wilderness, who fell prey to the doctrine of Balaam. They died in the wilderness and never experienced the promise.

Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

16 Giving place to this false doctrine must be stopped immediately. The Lord gives an or else. The Son of man says, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Notice the Lord will come and will fight against His own church! What a different doctrine this is! We usually hear how the Lord will build His church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. While this is true, for hell cannot prevail against the church, it is not true that the Lord will not fight against us when heresy is allowed. Correct doctrine is mandatory!

The Lord says, “Repent.” The angel is required to repent. He has allowed this false doctrine. This word repent is found six times in chapters 2 and 3. The Lord spoke this to Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. Isn’t it interesting that five of the seven churches were commanded to repent. As previously stated, the Greek word for repent is metanoeo meaning “to think differently.” It is amazing to me that most churches need to “think differently!” If they will not, He, the Son of man, the Lord Himself, says He will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Again, this coming of the Lord obviously is not the second coming. The Lord will come in judgment and come upon His church. We may think it is Satan. We may even call it the devil. In reality, it is the Son of man, Jesus Himself coming with the sword of His mouth to fight against a church.

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

17 Now the Lord gives the challenge. Again, as always, it is to him that hath an ear and to him that overcometh. Again, the only believer is an overcoming believer (1Jo 5:4). To these are promised the hidden manna and a white stone.

Hidden manna is a reference to the manna hidden in the ark of the covenant (Exo 16:33-34; Heb 9:4). Manna is the supernatural provision of God from heaven and is called the bread from heaven. Jesus became the reality of the bread from heaven. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:51).

A point that should be made is we easily see that this promise is not a promise of futuristic content. Why would we need hidden manna in “heaven?” This, and all the promises given to the overcomer, is for now and today. Jesus is the bread of life for today and forever. If any man eats that bread, he shall live forever!

The white stone is a little more difficult to properly interpret. There is no archaeological information or ancient historical writings that actually clarify to what this white stone is referring. It is usually interpreted in “probablies.” “Probably this was a practice of John’s day to which his readers understood,” etc. The student comes away without a clear understanding of what may be very vital information concerning the church and individual salvation. From the stone or rock, we get a picture of things eternal, and that it is white, makes us think of being clean. The importance is not the stone, neither that the stone is white, but rather what is on the stone.

Rather than speculate on the white stone, we look to the new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. A name in Scripture is always related to the character of the

18 Ibid, page 242
person possessing the name. Our personal written name, then, would speak of our personal individuality as an overcomer. At water baptism, we receive a new name. The consistent truth of water baptism is that it is always in the name, or into the name, of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 16; 10:48; 19:5). Christians, then, bear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Act 9:15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

The Lord says that no man knoweth the name except he that receiveth it. The name of Jesus is not known until it is received, and only the one receiving it can know it. It was the acquisition of the name of the King of kings who hath the sharp sword with two edges. The One with all authority and power (Mat 28:18) sending His name-bearers into all the world to make disciples. This name would be in direct contrast to the name of Augustus Caesar, who was king of his kingdom.

Ramsey writes,

“The readers of this letter, who possessed the key to its comprehension, hidden from the common world, could not fail to be struck with the analogy between this New Name and the Imperial title Augustus. That also had been a new name, deliberately devised by the Senate to designate the founder, and to mark the foundation of the new Empire... appropriated in 27 B.C. to the man who had been the savior of Rome, and whom already the popular belief had begun to regard as an incarnation of the divine nature in human form, sent down to earth to end the period of war and introduce the age of peace... the Christians of Pergamum, of all Asia, of the whole world--would catch with certainty the hidden meaning. All those Christians, when they were victorious, were to be placed in the same position as, or rather higher than, Augustus, having a New Name, the Name of God.”

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

18 As in all seven letters, this is addressed to the angel of the church in Thyatira, who was expected to read the letter to the people (see discussion 1:3).

Again comes the character of Christ to be projected to this assembly. The part of the portrait given is the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. This, of course, is from the portrait in chapter 1, verses 14 and 15.

The history of Thyatira will help. The city was heavily involved in pagan worship of two images. The local god was Tyrimnos, the son of Zeus. Zeus was the god of the gods. Jesus identifies Himself here as the Son of God. This is obviously a slap in the face to Tyrimnos. The second form of idolatry in the city was Caesar worship. Tremendous pressure was placed upon all people of Thyatira to participate in these two forms of worship.

Worship of nearly all pagan gods, including Tyrimnos, involved sex acts and eating meat offered to them. Pressure came from the local guilds (unions) to participate. If a person would not participate in the pagan worship, they would not be hired, or be discharged if they were employed. For example, it would be similar to large companies today not hiring a person unless they worshipped Mohammed. If the majority of the large companies did this, imagine the pressure upon Christian families.

The Lord says that he has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass. The angel and the church are to know that the Lord is looking with His blazing glare deep into the hearts of the people. He is ready to trample unrighteousness with His feet.

Revelation 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

19 Again the Lord says, as He says to all seven, I know thy works. Works are associated with charity, service, faith, patience, etc. (see 2:13). The works are written in the books and determine the eternal position of every person (Rev 20:11-15). Work for the churches is doing what is necessary to bring the gospel of the kingdom to cities.

The church at Ephesus had lost interest in its works. This was not the case here at Thyatira. Their works were increasing. The last were more

19 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 250

20 Chilton, The Days Of Vengeance, page 112
The Stone Cometh

than the first. The church was more active now than when it began.

Revelation 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

20 The commendation ended and the condemnation began with I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest... It is rare today to hear a preacher preach that the Son of God could actually have a few things against a church. He said the same thing to Pergamos. How little do we actually understand the King of Glory! We are taught about baby Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, crucified Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus, but we are rarely taught properly about the resurrected King Jesus who walks in the midst of the candlesticks.

He has things against His churches, and the things He had against that church were there because the church/angel sufferest something. The Strong’s Concordance defines the word eao translated as sufferest as “to let be; permit; leave alone.” This church at Thyatira had “let be” a negative situation. The angel did “permit” and did “leave alone” a situation that he knew should be corrected. The angel sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce.

The Lord used a third symbolic name familiar to his readers to relay the false doctrine filtering through this circle of churches. The Lord used the name Jezebel. He previously used two other names, Balaam (2:14) and Nicolaitanes (2:15). Just as connecting Balaam and Nicolaitanes together showed the stumbling aspects of the false doctrine, the Jezebel connection showed its seduction.

Jezebel will teach and seduce the servants of Jesus to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. It is the same doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. This time the Lord used Jezebel to convey His point.

Amazingly, a mark of this church that allows the Nicolaitanes’ doctrine and the presence of Jezebel is that it does not lack works. In fact, the contrary is true. The works of this church were spoken of this way by the Lord: “...the last to be more than...”

The congregation had obviously grown to love this individual and to receive what she had to say, which was much. No person could have such effect upon a local body except they were actively touching lives in the congregation. The sad part was the lives she touched were infected and would end in “great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds” (2:22).

The angel had obviously permitted this individual to teach and seduce people to fornicate. Why would an angel of a church permit such a thing? To answer this question we will look at several “allusion links” concerning Jezebel. We need to understand the way Jezebel functioned. First, Jezebel had the ability to stir up wickedness.

1 Kings 21:25 But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Though Jezebel was a real female person in the Old Testament, the spirit of Jezebel doesn’t only show up in women. Men can have a spirit of Jezebel also.

Once a person faced Jezebel, there was no desire to face it again. It was wicked and cruel. It used every device available to conquer and destroy. It was marked by its ability to constantly be associated with “stirred up” situations, to which it was to blame. As long as Jezebel was present, there is no peace. There is immorality, and there are witchcrafts.

2Ki 9:22 And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?

Though you may not have recognized it, we all have watched a Jezebel spirit do its work. All have watched a very “up” and spiritual church become “stirred up” against one another. All have watched

21 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 270
a very progressive church that was functioning in oneness suddenly have no peace. Observation of Jezebel will reveal its works, as even young men and young women who once worshipped and sought the Lord fall into all sorts of horror including immorality. All have watched the destruction of Jezebel’s witchcrafts as people become sick, need surgeries, finances fail, job security and advancement end, and bizarre and unusual disasters happen. Truly all can say, “What peace, so long as the whoredoms of Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?”

Jezebel functions, and is marked, by what the Bible calls “whoredoms.” A whore is a person who engages with many in sexual intercourse to obtain personal gain using motivation other than love. Having been with many marks Jezebel. She moves in “whoredoms,” plural. When Jezebel is finished, all that remains is destruction and grief. Ask Ahab. Ask Naboth. Ask Elijah.

Jezebel is a seducing spirit that appears innocent and sweet. However, by investigating its history, one will learn quickly the vileness of Jezebel. It leaves a trail. Also, one can uncover its brutality by provoking it to anger. Its intent, when uncovered and angered, is to kill and to destroy the man of God.

1Ki 19:1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.
1Ki 19:2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

The Jezebel spirit becomes violent and will plan and connive the destruction of anyone in its way. The Bible tells the story of Naboth and how Jezebel contacted people and turned them against righteous Naboth. It is awaiting the word that its wickedness has prevailed over the righteous.

1Ki 21:14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

It is to Jezebel that the Son of God said that church sufferest. It is the allusion from the Old Testament to which the Lord refers. The Lord will see to her destruction that is usually very gruesome.

1Ki 21:13 And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.
2Ki 9:7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the

The Revelation Of Jesus Christ Chapter 2
prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.
2Ki 9:33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.
2Ki 9:35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.
2Ki 9:36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:

Ramsey says,

“The extremely bitter and almost virulent tone in which the prophetess is spoken of seems, therefore not to be due to her personal character, but to be caused entirely by the principles which she set forth in a too persuasive and successful way: she was exercising an unhealthy influence, and her many excellent qualities made her the more dangerous, because they increased the authority of her words.”

That influence must be terminated. If not terminated and Jezebel was allowed to continue, she would melt the church into nothing more than a wicked cult. By misusing her influence acquired by good works and persuasive speaking, she would lead many to death and tribulation.

Revelation 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
21 It must be understood that King Jesus is intolerant of Jezebel and of the angel that tolerates (sufferest) her. This is not that we, or the Lord are not tolerant with one another’s idiosyncrasies. However, once the space to repent has been disregarded, and she and those who fornicate with her repented not, there will be some horrible things happening.

Revelation 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Revelation 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

22, 23 Though Jezebel was allowed to see the folly of her ways, she refused to repent. Now the Lord will take over.

“With grim humor, Jesus is saying: Do you want to ‘get in bed’ (i.e., commit fornication)? Very well--here’s a
The Stone Cometh
dethbed for you!” 23

Jezebel will suffer a horrible long-term death. Those who messed with her will the Lord cast into
great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.
The one with eyes like unto a flame of fire, and
his feet are like fine brass also says He will kill
her children with death. This is frightening. The
Lord will destroy that which Jezebel has produced.
This is the revelation of Jesus Christ. However,
this is not the Jesus revealed on television, radio, or
books. If this were the one on television, radio, or
books, no one would listen or purchase the books.
If this Jesus were preached, would we not be more
aware of the Jezebels and of the Nicolaitanes? Would
we not be more cautious of the doctrines to
which we listened? This is obviously the way Jesus
desires to be revealed. This is the Revelation of
Jesus Christ. The Lord wants all His churches to
know this. The Lord says that after He has dealt
with her children all the churches shall know that
I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts
and will give unto every one according to your
works.

Revelation 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in
Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which
have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will
put upon you none other burden.
Revelation 2:25 But that which ye have already hold
fast till I come.
24, 25 What Jezebel taught had become doctrine
in Thyatira. The angel and the church were called
to stop it. The doctrine obviously looked attractive
and religious. Jezebel always paints her face and
fixes her hair for Jehu.
2Ki 9:30 And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel
heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and
looked out at a window.

In actuality, her doctrine was the depths of Satan. Her doctrine appeared as though it should
be true. Her talking sounded pretty, and she looked
so sweet, but Jesus will find servants (eunuchs –
those who want none of her) to throw her down.
2Ki 9:32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and
said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him
two or three eunuchs.
2Ki 9:33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her

Revelation 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth
my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the
nations:
Revelation 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of
iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to
shivers: even as I received of my Father.
Revelation 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.
26-28 This power is specifically given to those
who keepeth my works unto the end and
overcometh. It is keepeth my WORKS! We
understand we are to keep His word, but notice the
Lord says works.

This is the identical power that the Lord
received of His Father. Many expositors will say
that Revelation chapters 1-3 have already
happened, and we are now waiting for chapter 4,
which will be the rapture of the church. Their
doctrine is that Jesus does not yet rule the nations.
He will reign during the 1,000-year millennium to
come. This verse clearly states that He, the Lord
Jesus, the Son of man, has already received this
authority over the nations. The Lord says even as I
received of my Father. The Lord is not going to
receive. He has received the rule. The stone has
been cut without hands and has crushed the feet of
the image. The kingdom of God was “set up” in the
days of those kings (Dan 2:44). Today, Jesus does
rule the nations with a rod of iron as the vessels
of a potter. The Lord can and does today crush
nations to shivers.

To those who overcometh, the Lord will give
the morning star. They will be able to enjoy all of
the day from its rising unto its setting.

Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what
the Spirit saith unto the churches.
29 If the angel read the letter and the people
heard the letter, they should hear what the Spirit
saith unto the churches. The church at Thyatira
was sent this letter literally. This letter was
specifically for “the church in Thyatira.” However,
every church can draw much from it and must! Seiss writes,

23 Chilton, The Days Of Vengeance, page 114
The Stone Cometh

“I thus find the seven Churches in every Church, giving to those Epistles a directness of application to ourselves, and to professing Christians of every age, of the utmost solemnity and importance.”

Most pastors would agree even if their eschatology is different. Every church should examine their own selves to find anything that the Son of man may have against them.

C. Contemporary Theological View(s)

1. Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of....

There are three primary views of interpretation for chapters 2 and 3. These are:

(1) Literal churches to which these letters only apply. Thus the revelation only applies to these churches. These holding this position are the minority, but do exist.

(2) Though there were literal churches with these names, they were not actually to whom John was instructed to write. John was actually writing to the ages and specific times through the years when these types of churches would eventually exist. Consequently, the Revelation becomes primarily futuristic with each age concluding that it is Laodicea (the last age). This view is the primary, contemporary teaching, and what will be heard in the majority of pulpits when teaching from Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

(3) These are literal churches that John was writing to exactly as Paul or any other apostle would write to the church at Corinth, or Colosse, or Rome or any other location. These seven churches have specific glories and individual problems that need attending just as Corinth, or Colosse, or Rome on any other location. All churches through history can glean from what is written to these seven churches, just as all churches can glean from what was written to Ephesus or Corinth or Rome. Thus the Revelation is addressed to those churches concerning “things which must shortly come to pass” with all ages gleaning and receiving understanding from what is written.

Tenney says,

“The part of Revelation on which there has been the greatest amount of agreement among expositors both with regard to the points of division and with regard to the interpretation is the section containing the letters to the seven churches of Asia.”

Though this may be true in Tenney’s eyes, most find tremendous disagreement even here. Swaggart says,

“Some have tried to place the seven churches spoken of by Jesus in a dispensational position whereby each church beginning with Ephesus applied to a period of several hundred years (a dispensation of the churches). By this rule of thumb, it would be concluded that we are now living in the Laodicean Age, inasmuch as Laodicea is the last church in this list of seven churches.

As we have mentioned, every dispensationalist since this teaching emerged teaches that it is the Laodicean church. However, this theory is not taught in the book of Revelation; thereby, much confusion and many false teachings have been the result of this theory.

Surely the message that Jesus gave to all the churches of John’s day applies to all churches, people, and pastors for all time.”

Scofield’s said,

“Again, these messages by their very terms go beyond the local assemblies mentioned. It can be seen that Ephesus (2:1-7), though a local church in the apostle's day, is typical of the first century church as a whole; Smyrna (2:8-11) characterizes the church under persecution, e.g. from A.D. c.100-316; Pergamum (2:12-17), ‘where Satan’s throne is’ (2:13; cp. 2:14-15, and notes [Scofield’s], is suggestive of the church mixing with the world, e.g. in the Middle Ages; Thyatira (2:18-29) reveals how evil progresses in the church and idolatry is practiced; Sardis (3:1-6) is representative of the church as dead, yet still having a minority of godly men and women, as during the Reformation; Philadelphia (3:7-13) shows revival and a state of spiritual advance; and Laodicea (3:14-19) is illustrative of the final state of apostasy which the visible church will experience.”

Another contemporary expositor and dispensationalists, Norman Harrision writes,

“For the Early Church, our Lord from heaven revealed a..."
seven-fold historical development of the Church (Revelation 2 and 3), evidently requiring an extended period of time. And yet, to that Church were given the reiterated words of assurance, ‘Behold I come quickly’ (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)... We see from the Scriptures that Christ could not have returned in the lifetime of Peter; nor yet in the days of the Apostles; nor yet before the Reformation; nor yet before the missionary program is completed; nor yet before the apostasy has overtaken us; nor yet before the last days in which we seem to be living.”

Though both Swaggart and Scofield look for the rapture in chapter 4 of Revelation, they interpret very differently. As Harrison disclosed in his writing, he does not see the destruction of Jerusalem as a return of the Son of man during the life of Peter and the days of the Apostles. His position would be close to blasphemy in that the Lord said some of those apostles standing with Him would “not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom” (Mat 16:28; 20:23; 24:27, 30; 26:64).

The problem seems obvious. Dispensationalists and/or most contemporary expositors do not consider the coming of the Lord upon Jerusalem as part of their doctrine. Without this understanding, Matthew 24 has not happened, although the temple of the Jews was destroyed just as Jesus said and the worship of the house of Moses terminated in A.D. 70. They still await Daniel’s “abomination of desolation” (Mat 24:15) requiring 7 more years. Even though Jesus explained that desolation in Luke 21:20, i.e. the destruction of Jerusalem by armies, many refuse to believe Him. If we believe Harrison, all the apostles died and the words of Jesus were not accurate concerning His coming prior to their physical death.

If we believe the coming of the Lord was the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, then the previous Scriptures concerning some of the apostles being alive when Jesus returned and the destruction of the temple according to Matthew 24 have already been fulfilled. Jesus did say “Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Mat 24:34).

Concerning the interpretation of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, when a coming of the Lord is recognized in A.D. 70, it is no longer necessary to place the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 in the future so the Lord can Advent. They are His churches, and He can come to them whenever He desires. We are left with letters to churches from which to glean for our church life today, instead of being forced to await a special day when those admonitions of the Son of man might apply.

2. Revelation 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour... (2:5, 9, 13, 19, 23, 26; 3:1, 2, 8, 15)

James makes it extremely clear that a person’s faith without works is dead faith (Jam 2:20, 26). There is no real faith unless there are works. Faith produces works. This is exactly what Jesus has told these churches.

The Greek word used and translated “works” is ergon and simply means “toil.” This “toil” is associated with labor and is exactly with what Paul associates grace in 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Grace becomes the power source which produces good works (see Rom 12 grace giftings). Paul’s good works as an apostle were actually grace laboring. That grace had been given by God. Paul allowed grace to work and did not receive God’s grace in vain. In the Scriptures, grace is often associated with works and laboring, especially when the thought is connected with salvation. A popular and often quoted verse is Ephesians 2:8-9 telling us we are saved by grace. Often the quote stops before verse 10 is stated.

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The passage in verses 8-9 shows we are not saved by works. However, there is a B.C. and an A.D. aspect to our salvation. Before Christ (BC.), there is no work that anyone can do to become “saved.” There is no sinner’s prayer, there is no church attendance, and there is no offering one can give. There is nothing – no work – anyone can do to be saved. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44), Jesus said. Once this drawing of the Father is responded to by faith, the grace of God is bestowed, and a new-creation being begins forming (2Co 5:17). Paul says, “For we are his
The Stone Cometh

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10). The purpose of the new creation is **good works** which were ordained that we should walk in them. Walk in what? “Them,” the **good works** (also see Eph 4:1, 7).

The doctrine of works includes an understanding of grace. This is the reason that the Son of man said that He had something against specific churches. They had received the grace to save, but were not walking in the works of the grace God gave. The grace was “in vain.” Grace received in vain will cause serious, eternal church problems, such as names being blotted out (Rev 3:5).

The Revelation clearly shows that people will be judged according to their works. They will not be judged according to the sinner’s prayer they prayed, or how well they spoke in tongues, or how they prophesied. They will be judged according to their works (Rev 20:11-14).

The name is placed in the books (Rev 20:11-14) because of the good works that show the response to the grace given by God to save. Grace truly does save. However, grace can be in vain. Grace saves when it is utilized and when good works are produced.

We find a very similar situation at the judgment seat of Christ, where Paul tells us “we must all appear.” Paul, making sure the Corinthians understand the need to labor, says we labor so that in or out of the body “we may be accepted of Him.”

2Co 5:9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Paul said every one will “receive the things done in his body, according to that he had done, whether good or bad.” Works will be tried as by fire. What has a person done while in the body worthy of record in the books of heaven? Works done with the energy of grace are like gold, silver, and precious stone. The fire only verifies. Everything else is wood, hay, and stubble.

The body of Christ needs a correct works doctrine for “These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works” (Rev 2:18, 19).