

Chapter 2:

Ephesus: Name means “First Love”

John makes it clear that it is Jesus speaking to the churches through the description of whose words it is. He recognizes the hard work and perseverance of the church. He knows that the church does not tolerate wicked people. This church has even been able to identify false apostles, meaning that their understanding of the word of God is high. Even though this church has endured hardships and suffering for following Jesus, they continue to persevere. Jesus communicates that He recognizes that they have forgotten their first love. The first love should be Jesus and His teaching. They are so busy “working” for God, that they are not spending intimate time actually being with and loving God. This church is at risk of being destroyed if they don’t return to their first love. It is in their favor that the church hates the practices of the Nicolaitans, which Jesus also hates. “Nicolaitans” refers to church hierarchy that tries to rule over the lives and faith of the congregation. This usually happens when a group tries to add a bunch of extra rules, behaviors, and rituals that people must follow, instead of focusing on being Christlike. “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This is saying, whoever is listening and understanding what is being said, let the Holy Spirit minister to you; listen and obey. To the people that are victorious, “overcomers” is used in some translations, Jesus will give you the right to eat from the tree of life in heaven.

Smyrna: Name means “Bruised Myrrh”

John again writes in a manner to show that it is Jesus speaking to them. Jesus knows that they have gone through trials and are poor, from an earthly perspective, however they are rich, by God’s standard. Jesus is aware of those who claim to be Jewish and are not. They slander the name of God and are really worshipping the devil. Jesus tells them not to be afraid of what they are about to suffer. The devil is going to put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer for 10 days. “The number 10 represents a complete and perfect numeral. The meaning of 10, is one of testimony, law, responsibility, and the completeness of order. Instead of seeing the specific number of days of suffering to be 10, looking at this figuratively appears to be more appropriate. Consider the following: It is our legal responsibility to suffer for Christ, and in that suffering will develop our perfect and complete testimony. Jesus tells them, continue to be faithful, even unto death, and you will earn a victor’s crown. Again, Jesus says, whoever is listening and understanding what is being said, let the Holy Spirit minister to you; listen and obey. “The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.” This refers to the death of those who did not accept Jesus as their savior. After the unbelievers are resurrected at the end of the millennium age, the non-believers will face the white thrown judgement and then be thrown into the lake of fire. This is referred to as the second death.

Pergamum: Name means “United by Marriage”

John again writes in a manner to show that it is Jesus speaking to them. This city was extremely evil and led by ungodly men. The statement of “where Satan has his throne”, speaks to just how evil this city was. Antipas was a Christ follower that wouldn’t renounce Christ and was put inside a large

metal bull. The bull was then heated up and Antipas was cooked alive inside this bull. He still would not renounce Christ. There were many others that were tortured and martyred for their faith in Christ, in this same manner and others. Even with such strong witnesses in the church, there were those within the church that strayed into evil teachings of Balaam, which involved idol worship, eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. Other members of the church went another direction and followed the Nicolaitans, essentially worshipping the church hierarchy, instead of worshipping Jesus. Jesus warns the wrong-doers to change their ways and repent, otherwise they will end up on the side that Jesus fights against with the sword of His mouth. Again, Jesus says, whoever is listening and understanding what is being said, let the Holy Spirit minister to you; listen and obey. To the people that are victorious, Jesus promises some of the hidden manna. This speaks to the manna that was kept in the Ark of the Covenant. The white stone represents an award for being victorious. Some reference an athlete, in ancient times, receiving a white stone as a trophy for winning a game. Another thought is that in ancient legal courts, if a person was found innocent, the judges would hold up a white stone, if the person was guilty, they would hold up a dark stone. The symbolism here is showing victory. The significance of a “new name” is from the Old Testament. Often when a person was found to be righteous in the sight of God, God would give them a new name. This change in identity would help them embrace their victory and responsibilities. The meaning could also represent those who are victorious receiving the new name of Jesus as promised to the Philadelphia church.

Thyatira; Name Means “Daughter”

John shows it is Jesus speaking to them by referencing His eyes like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. Jesus speaks to knowing what the church is doing: good deeds, love and faith, service and perseverance, doing more than doing at first. This shows growth and maturity. However, the church tolerates the false prophet “Jezebel” (reference to an alluring-influential woman), who leads the believers there into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols. She is clearly part of the church as she has been given time to repent, but she is unwilling to do so. So, Jezebel and her followers will all be suffering unless they repent. Her “children” will be killed. All the churches will know that Jesus is aware of what is on their hearts and minds. They will be held accountable for their deeds. Jesus tells the remainder of the church that is being obedient, to continue doing what they have been doing until He returns. To those who are victorious and continues to do the will of Jesus, they will receive authority over the nations during the millennium age when Jesus is reigning over the earth from the New Jerusalem. They will have strength and wisdom to administer judgment. When Jesus says He will give them the morning star, He is speaking of giving Himself to them. Again, Jesus says, whoever is listening and understanding what is being said, let the Holy Spirit minister to you; listen and obey.