

as for your works, the last are more than the first. (19) What wonderful things to have said about such a small city and her church—to have the Son of God *know your works, love, service, faith, and...patience*. And not just that, but that their works, now, are more than when they first started! But there's a problem. While they were dedicated and strong in their faith and in their works, they weren't pure.

**RV 2.20-21** ~ *Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.*

**EX:** I can't help but wonder what Jezebel's actual name was (it seems unlikely it was actually "**Jezebel**"). But whatever it was she was named, we can be pretty confident what she was like: she was influential in all the wrong ways—pulling the church down with her into sin and vice. Again, we see Paul's prophecies fulfilled: *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2TM 4.3-4)*

To this smallest of churches, Jesus gives the greatest attention. And He is clear about what will come of this false teacher: *Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. <sup>23</sup> I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. (RV 2.22-23)*

**2TM 4.5** ~ *But as for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

**AP:** The church in Thyatira may not have been **pure**, but one way or another, they would be. Christ would wipe out Jezebel and her false disciples. And that's always God's answer to falsehood and impurity: He makes it pure again. It's just a question of whether the purification comes through our own submission, or our own destruction.

**RV 2.24-29** ~ *"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. <sup>25</sup> But hold fast what you have till I come. <sup>26</sup> And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—<sup>27</sup> 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father; <sup>28</sup> and I will give him the morning star. <sup>29</sup> 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "*

## CONCLUSION

It can be easy for us to allow the signs and symbols of **RV** to distract us: to cause us to lose sight of the message of the book: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. (RV 1.1a)*—to help them remember *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (RV 1.5b-6)*

Christ gave John a tour through the area of Asia Minor—a **whirlwind tour** that took him from **Ephesus** to **Laodicea**. Each of the stops on the tour would teach a strong message that speaks to us, even today. To **Ephesus**, He called for them to **remember their first love**. To **Smyrna**, He warned them to prepare for suffering. To **Pergamum**, He urged them to **stand for truth**, and to **Thyatira**, He entreated them to **be devoted to holiness**.

We'll pick up with **Sardis** as we continue our **whirlwind tour** through Asia Minor. Until then, Brethren, *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

## INVITATION

#677 [Exp-NTP]  
10/30/2025

**A Whirlwind Tour – Pt 1**  
PC \_\_\_ Pchd \_\_\_\_\_

RV 2 (NKJV)

**QUESTION:** What lessons can we learn from the 7 churches of Asia Minor?

## TRN TO RV 2

### INTRODUCTION

**ILL—Retirement Plans** (several years away; we'd like to do a tour of the US) There exists lots of these online: tours that are put together to allow you to see as much of the United States in as efficient a route as possible. I'd like to someday do this: even though it would be a bit of a **whirlwind tour** to try to cover so much of the US in one trip.

### BACKGROUND

The New Testament is basically a collection of letters: letter to individuals like Timothy, Onesimus, and Theophilus. But it's also composed of letters to congregations: like the church in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. But in **RV**, we see something different: incredible and strange visions seeking to encourage the church in the first century. But following an initial vision of the Lord, it, also, is revealed as a collection of letters.

Some have thought these sections to be strange—even to the point of arguing that they were added later. But there is no evidence of that—quite the contrary, actually. These letters take what would have, otherwise, have been a heady concept and makes it personal. By writing to 7 actual congregations in Asia Minor, we **look back** to the majestic description of Christ in **RV 1**, **around** at the conditions of the church of the day, and forward to the visions and themes that would be explored through the rest of the book.

**RV** is filled with numbers. One of the big ones is "7". And commonly, when these "7" appear, they are in groupings of "**3 and 4**" or "**4 and 3**". For these next two weeks, we'll be looking at these 7 letters: first, in the grouping of 4, and then, next week, in the grouping of 3.

These letters follow a similar pattern: each written *"to the angel of the church"* and closing with the same call: *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Contained within each metaphorical "**sandwich**" is the "**meat**"—words of encouragement and/or rebuke. We aren't **Ephesus**, **Smyrna**, **Pergamum**, **Thyatira**, **Sardis**, **Philadelphia**, or **Laodicea**. But the advice and words given can still teach us: so, Brethren, *let [us] hear what the Spirit says to the churches* as we go through a whirlwind tour of the churches in Asia Minor.

### REVELATION/Revelation 2 and 3/7 Letters to the Churches – Hazelip, Harold

#### **BD1: Ephesus: Remember Your First Love (RV 2.1-7)**

John's first letter is *To the angel of the church of Ephesus (1a)*: likely the closest to the Apostles' heart as both he and Paul had made it their base of operations, previously. Ephesus had begun as the heart of the outreach to the Gentile nations—inspiring and serving as the launching-pad of numerous evangelistic outreach efforts.

When Paul left Ephesus, he'd warned the apostles of what was coming: *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup> Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (AC 20.29-31)* Clearly, his words had come true:

**RV 2.1b-7** ~ *'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup> and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.'*

**EX:** They'd resisted the false teachings—they'd stood tall against false prophets and apostles and had remained in the faith. However, there was a problem: while their faithfulness to doctrine had remained, their faithfulness in heart had not:

**RV 2.4-6** ~ *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* What a strange concept: they were committed to truth and teaching—but their hearts weren't in it anymore. They didn't serve out of gracious love and dedication to God as they had before—their faith had become hollow and rote: by the numbers. *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” (MT 23.15)* Like the Pharisees and Sadducees before them, Christ pronounced woe against the church in Ephesus.

**RV 2.5-6** ~ *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. <sup>6</sup> But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

**AP:** Christ's call was clear: return to the way you used to be and the way you used to love. Restore your heart of faithfulness and **remember your first love**—otherwise, your lampstand in the presence of God will go out—you will no longer be permitted in the presence of God. What a terrible warning! It wasn't enough to stand against unrighteousness: you also needed to **remember your first love**—you needed to have the original faith and joy and dedication you had when you first became a Christian. Only then will your lampstand remain: only then can you be given of the tree of life!

**RV 2. 7** ~ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”*

#### **BD2: Smyrna: Prepare for Suffering (RV 2.8-11)**

In His second letter, John wrote *to the angel of the church in Smyrna (8a)* the shortest of all the letters. Located about 40 miles north of Ephesus, Smyrna was a seaport second only to Ephesus in trade. Described on coinage as **“first in Asia in beauty and size”**, it was considered the **“crown city”**. But Christ would reveal the truth: it wasn't Smyrna who was **“first”**: *“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: (8b)* The true **“first”** was Christ—and He knows all: *“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (9)*

**EX:** He knew all they'd gone through: He knew that, despite the forced poverty they were undergoing for keeping their faith, they were, in fact, rich because of their faith in Christ. And He knew the evil deeds that the Jewish opposition to the church was performing—and would continue to perform. In this moment, we expect for Christ to say that the suffering was going to end—that things were going to get better. But He doesn't—instead, He tells them to **prepare for suffering**.

**RV 2.10a** ~ *Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.*

**EX:** In truth, it was going to get worse long before it got better. They were going to be thrown into prison, persecuted, and killed. But it wouldn't last forever: just **“10 days”**—not a literal 10 days, but a small, short time in the grand scheme of things. And in light of that, He urged them as He urges us: *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (RV 2.10b)*

**AP:** Christ urged the church to understand that suffering was coming—it was a natural part of the Christian experience. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise,*

*honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. (1PT 1.6-9)* From that suffering comes a promised blessing and grace: the realization that while the first death may claim them, the second will not: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”* <sup>1</sup> (11)

#### **BD3: Pergamum: Stand for Truth (RV 2.12-17)**

Following the two coastal cities of Ephesus and Smyrna, Christ's attention turns to **Pergamum**—the capital of the Roman province of Asia, another 60 miles north of Smyrna. About 15 miles inland, it was the first city to have had the right to build an imperial temple: a place of Roman power, authority, and rule: *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: <sup>13</sup> “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. (12-13a)*

**EX:** From this Roman rule had come Roman persecution—even leading to the death of one of the earliest named Christian martyrs: *And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. (13b)* And while they'd generally remained faithful, they hadn't all. Some of them had begun to fall under the wiles of false teachers: *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (14-15)* **Does this mean that they'd actually followed a man named Balaam?** No. But like Balaam, who'd been concerned about power and the prestige of Balak and so had led the Israelites to give in to sexual immorality, they'd likewise compromised: they'd given in a bit to error with pagan customs and temples, consuming food willingly offered in sacrifice to idols. **So, what was Christ's advice for them?**

**RV 2.16-17** ~ *Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

**AP:** Christ's response to them was to **stand for truth**—to not compromise truth for comfort and ease. While we don't have the kinds of circumstances they had then: requiring sacrifices to idols and emperors, we still can find ourselves willing to compromise like they did. To this, both Christ and John would remind us: *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the Lord! <sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart! <sup>3</sup> They also do no iniquity; They walk in His ways. (PS 119.1-3)*

They were worried about having something to eat—being able to get by unless they compromised. They were worried about being able to endure in **“the real world”** unless they had received the approval of the Roman authorities. But Christ encouraged them that He would provide both food and approval: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”* <sup>1</sup> (RV 2.17) In return, they merely had to **stand for truth!**

#### **BD4: Thyatira: Be Devoted to Holiness (RV 2.18-29)**

Up until this point, Christ had only addressed congregations in the big three cities of Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum. But if one were to travel further inland to the Southeast, they'd reach *the church in Thyatira (18a)*. It was considered an insignificant rest stop: least known, least important, and least remarkable. But to *the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: (18b)* they weren't least known, least important, or least remarkable. *I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and*