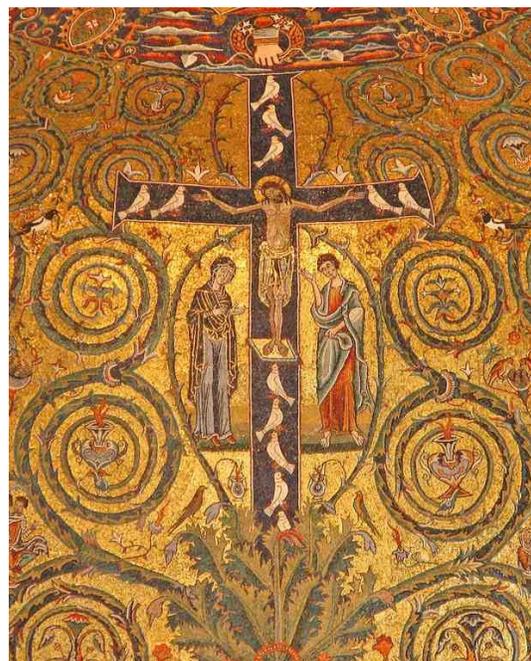


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

John's Commission to Write (1.17-20)

Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Ephesus (2.1-7)



When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. ¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

I. Review From Last Week (Rev 1.9-16)

1. Christ coming on the clouds (cf. Daniel 7): glory and judgment
2. “tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance that in Jesus”
3. Christ
 - a. Bridegroom and Temple
 - b. King and Judge
 - c. High Priest and Shepherd

II. John’s Commission to Write (Rev 1.17-20)

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last,¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead” (1.17a)
2. “ But he laid his right hand on me” (1.17b)
3. “Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.” (1.17c-18)
4. “Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.” (1.19)
5. “As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” (1.20)
 - a. Mystery (requires divine explanation; cf. Dan 2; Eph 3.3-9; 5.32; Col 1.26-17, 2.2-3; 1 Tim 3.16)
 - b. the angels of the seven churches (?)

Deuteronomy 32.8: When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. (LXX)

Daniel 10.20-21: Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.²¹ But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth: there is none who contends by my side against these except Michael, your prince. (ESV)
 - c. the church symbolized as lampstands (before God; trees; fire – light and heat)

III. Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Ephesus (2.1-7)

1. Ephesus in the First Century

- a. administrative, commercial (although, problem with harbour), and religious centre
- b. Temples to Artemis, Roma, Divus Julius (*apotheosis*), and Domitian
- c. *Neōkoros* ("temple custodian") of the imperial cult in Asia Minor

2. Christianity in First-Century Ephesus

- a. Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Timothy, John and Mary (Jesus' mother)
- b. 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1-2 Timothy, John, 1-3 John, Revelation



Artemis (Diana)

Acts 18.18-19; 24-28: After this, Paul stayed many days longer and then took leave of the brothers and set sail for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had cut his hair, for he was under a vow. ¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus, and he left them there, but he himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews ... ²⁴ Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Acts 19.18-19; 23-29: Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. ¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver ... ²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship." ²⁸ When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² ‘‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’” (Rev 2.1-7)

3. Basic Structure of the Imperial-Prophetic Addresses to the Seven Churches

- a. command to write
 - b. Christ identifies himself (cf. Rev 1.9-20)
 - c. commendation
 - d. rebuke/accusation
 - e. exhortation to repentance
 - f. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
 - g. promise to the one who conquers
4. **Christ’s Self-identification:** “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.’” (2.1)
5. **Commendation:** “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary ... Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”
- a. toil and patient endurance (patiently enduring; have not grown weary)
 - b. cannot bear with those who are evil (evidence: have tested false apostles), but bear Christ’s name
 - i. apostle = itinerant missionary (not one of the Twelve)
 - ii. Warnings about false teachers in Ephesus: 1 Tim 1.3-11; 4.1-8; 6.2-7, 20-21; 2 Tim 3.1-7; 1 John 2.18-28; 4.1-6

Acts 20.26-38: Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one’s silver or gold or

apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'."

1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (cf. Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.1, 9.1)

6. **Rebuke/Accusation:** "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

- a. Love for one another

John 13:35: By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

1 John 3:10-12: By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

1 John 4:20-5:5: If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. ^{5.1} Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- b. zeal for Gospel-witness (dimming light/heat from the lampstand)

Matthew 24:12-14: And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

7. **Exhortation to Repentance:** "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."
8. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

9. **Promise:** "To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God'."

a. Paradise of God (Persian loan-word: "walled garden" – cf. 2 Cor 12.1-4)

b. Tree of Life (past and future)

Genesis 2.9: And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden.

Genesis 3.24: He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Revelation 22.2: through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

c. Paradise and Tree of Life (present – cf. Song of Songs)

Exodus 26.1: Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them.

Exodus 26.30-35: Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain. ³¹ "And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. ³² And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. ³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place. ³⁵ And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.

Proverbs 3.18: She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.

Proverbs 11.30: The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

Proverbs 15.4: A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

