

GOD'S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED!

REVELATION 2: 1-7

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His head and hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze; refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two edged sword....Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and Hades. Revelation 1: 14-16, 17b-18

Jesus Christ Speaks to the Church

With the exception of the Church of Laodicea, each of the letters to the seven Churches open with a description of the Risen Christ from chapter 1:

To the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: The words of him who *holds the seven stars in his right hand.*

To the angel of the Church in Smyrna, write: The words of *the words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.*

To the angel of the Church in Pergamum write: The words of him *who has the sharp two-edged sword.*

To the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: The words of the Son of God, *who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished Bronze.*

To the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: The words of him *who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.*

To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write: The words of the holy one, the true one, *who has the key of David, who opens and no one can shut, who shuts and no one opens.* (Isaiah 22: 22)

Lessons for the Church of Jesus Christ

All true churches of Christ in his glory, revelation and manifestation

No one church has all of the glory, essence, revelation and manifestation of Christ

The most successful trick of the Adversary is to create division among churches regarding the superiority of their share of the glory, essence, revelation and manifestation of Christ

Churches can have the revelation and manifestation of Christ and still be in error and imperfect in their practice and teaching

Christ will discipline and correct erroneous teaching and practice

Imperfect churches can still have enough of the revelation and manifestation of Christ to be instruments of salvation

Points to Ponders:

What kind of message do you think Christ would have for our church today if he were to write us?

What characteristics of the seven churches (good and bad) that Christ addresses in the Book of Revelation do we see in our own church?

How do you (individually) and how do we (as a community of faith) correct what is bad and strengthen what is good?

Verses 1-7, The Church in Ephesus

The City of Ephesus

In time of John, Ephesus was the greatest harbor in Asia and gateway to Asia
 Greatest and wealthiest city in Asia
 Self-governing free city and no Roman troops stationed there
 Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of seven wonders of ancient world
 Center of pagan superstition; Ephesian amulets and charms

Ephesus and early Christianity

Paul stayed longer in Ephesus than anywhere else and was especially close to the members of that congregation (Acts 19-20)
 Paul's preaching created such a stir that a riot broke out in Ephesus
 Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos were also together in Ephesus (Acts 18: 19, 24-26)
 Timothy is associated with Ephesus and is regarded as its first bishop (I Tim.1: 3)
 The apostle John was a leading figure in Ephesus. Legend is that he brought Mary the Lord's mother there and that she was buried there.

Message to the Church in Ephesus

Great opposition and strongholds require toil and patient endurance as distinct from approaches such as to name it and claim it, or praise solves all problems

The necessity of tests

The Scripture test
 The Experience test
 The Fruit test
 The Time test

Loss of first love

Loss of fire
 Loss of love for Christ
 Loss of Christ mission for Christ church
 Loss of hunger for the new
 Loss of love for one another

The Way to Restoration

Remember! (Example of Prodigal son)
 Repent! Take Responsibility
 Do! No real repentance without action

The penalty of failure to act

Church without glory, revelation, manifestation, essence of Christ
 Church that has lost its place as a voice to be taken seriously
 Church with vibrant past, but weak present and doubtful future

Nicolaitans

Nicolaus in Acts 6: 5 ??
 Tolerance of pagan practices and immorality
 Greatest threat to integrity of faith came from inside (false teachings, compromise) rather than outside the church

Ears to Hear

Holy Spirit still speaks: Clearly
 Consistently
 Creatively