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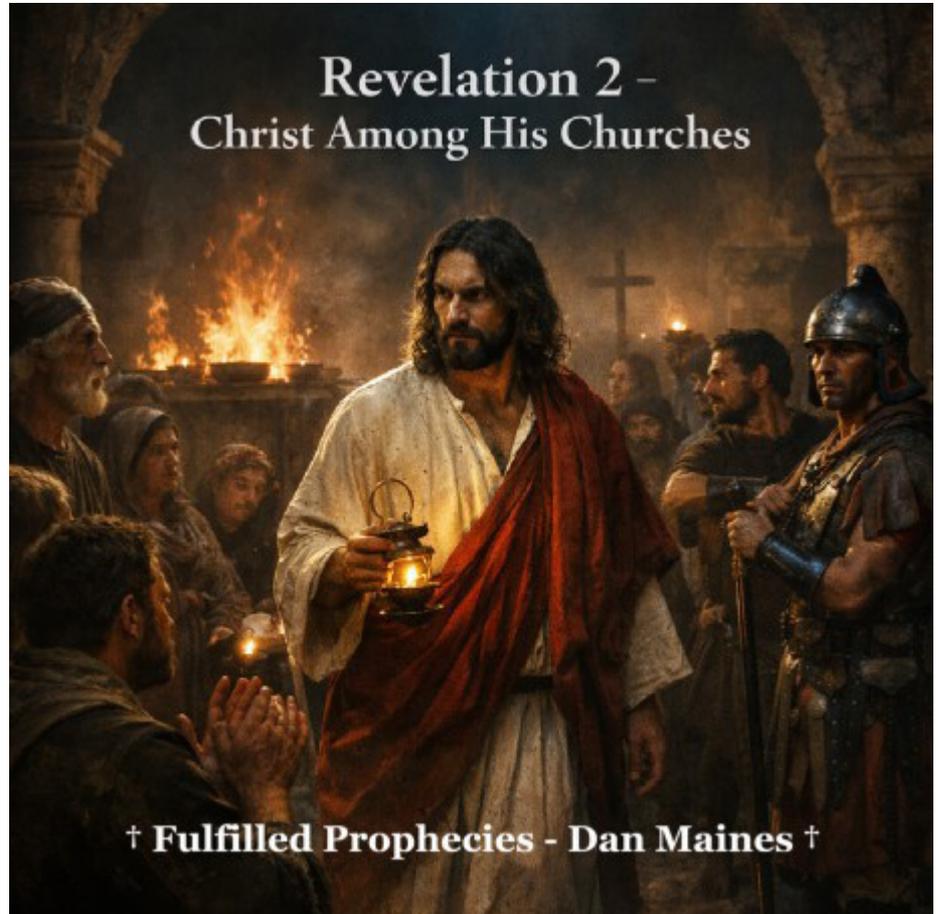
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Revelation 2 - Christ Among His Churches



By Dan Maines

Revelation 2 - Christ Among His Churches

Introduction

† Revelation chapter 2 records Christ examining the spiritual condition of several real first century churches. These weren't symbolic congregations from some distant future age. These were real believers living in cities across Asia Minor while the events leading to the destruction of Jerusalem were approaching.

† The book of Revelation begins by saying the things written in it were about to take place soon (Revelation 1:1, 3). That means these churches were living in the exact period when those events were unfolding. Christ was warning them, correcting them, and encouraging them to remain faithful.

† These letters reveal something extremely important. Jesus Christ wasn't distant from His church. He was walking among them, observing their works, correcting their failures, and rewarding their faithfulness.

Revelation 2:1

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

† Christ's authority over His churches is absolute. The seven stars represent the messengers of the churches and the lampstands represent the churches themselves (Revelation 1:20).

† Ephesus was one of the largest cities in Asia Minor and contained the famous temple of Artemis, one of the wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19:23-27).

† Strabo described Ephesus as a major commercial and religious center of the Roman province of Asia.

Revelation 2:2-3

I know your deeds and your labor and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people, and you have put those who call themselves apostles to the test, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured on account of My name, and have not become weary.

† Christ begins with commendation. He knew their works, labor, and perseverance. Nothing done in His service escapes His

notice (Hebrews 4:13).

† The Ephesian church tested those claiming to be apostles. Paul had warned their elders that false teachers would arise from within the church (Acts 20:29-30).

† Their endurance demonstrates that faithfulness isn't measured by comfort but by perseverance in truth.

Revelation 2:4-5

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

† The church had strong doctrine but had lost its original love and devotion.

† Truth without love becomes empty religion (1 Corinthians 13:1-2).

† The warning about removing the lampstand means losing their place as a functioning church representing Christ.

Revelation 2:6

But you have this, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

† The Nicolaitans promoted compromise with pagan practices.

† Early church writer Irenaeus said they encouraged participation in idolatry and immoral behavior.

† Christ's statement that He hates their deeds shows that grace never excuses sin.

Revelation 2:7

The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

† The tree of life points back to Eden where humanity originally had access before the fall (Genesis 3:22-24).

† Through Christ that access was restored.

† Overcoming refers to remaining faithful during the trials of that generation (1 John 5:4-5).

Revelation 2:8-9

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the slander by those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

† Smyrna was a wealthy city, yet the Christians there suffered poverty due to persecution.

† Refusing emperor worship often resulted in economic hardship.

† Christ reminds them that He died and came back to life, proving death itself had been defeated.

Revelation 2:10-11

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.

† The ten days represent a short defined period of testing.

† The crown of life was a powerful image in Smyrna where athletic victors received crowns.

† The second death refers to final separation from God (Revelation 20:14).

Revelation 2:12-13

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold firmly to My name, and did not deny your faith in Me, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

† Pergamum was a major center of emperor worship in the Roman Empire.

† The phrase Satan's throne likely refers to the dominance of pagan temples and imperial cult worship.

† Antipas is remembered as an early Christian martyr who remained faithful.

Revelation 2:14-15

But I have a few things against you, because you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. So you too, have some who in the same way hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

† The teaching of Balaam refers to the Old Testament event where Israel was seduced into idolatry (Numbers 25:1-3).

† Some believers in Pergamum were compromising with pagan practices.

† Cultural compromise has always been a major danger for the church.

Revelation 2:16-17

Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will wage war against them with the sword of My mouth. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows except the one who receives it.

† The sword of Christ's mouth represents His word of judgment (Hebrews 4:12).

† Hidden manna represents God's spiritual provision.

† The white stone likely symbolized acquittal in ancient courts.

Revelation 2:18-19

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: I know your deeds, and your love, and faith, and service, and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

† Thyatira was commended for growing in love, faith, and service.

† Christ's eyes like fire symbolize His ability to see every motive.

† Their increasing deeds demonstrate genuine spiritual growth.

Revelation 2:20-21

But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality.

† Jezebel symbolizes corrupt teaching within the church.

† Like the Old Testament queen who corrupted Israel, false teachers were leading believers into sin (1 Kings 16:31).

† Christ gave time for repentance, showing His patience before judgment.

Revelation 2:22-23

Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with plague, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

† Christ's judgment against false teachers demonstrates His authority.

† He searches hearts and minds and knows every motive (Jeremiah 17:10).

† His justice is based on each person's deeds.

Revelation 2:24-25

But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them, I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless

what you have, hold firmly until I come.

† A faithful remnant remained in the church.

† Christ placed no additional burden on them beyond remaining faithful.

† His coming refers to the judgment events that were approaching in that generation.

Revelation 2:26-29

The one who overcomes, and the one who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are shattered, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

† This promise reflects Psalm 2:8-9 where the Messiah rules the nations.

† Believers share in Christ's authority because they are united with Him.

† The morning star represents Christ Himself (Revelation 22:16).

Historical References

† Irenaeus recorded the immoral teachings of the Nicolaitans.

† Polycarp of Smyrna was later martyred there, confirming the persecution the church faced.

† Eusebius recorded the early persecutions that took place across Asia Minor.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Christ still sees everything happening within His church.

† Sound doctrine must remain connected with love.

† Compromise with surrounding culture always leads to corruption.

† Faithfulness to Christ leads to life and victory.

Q & A Appendix

Q Were these real historical churches?

A Yes. These were real congregations located in Asia Minor during the first century (Revelation 1:11). Archaeology confirms the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira existed exactly where Revelation places them.

Q What does overcoming mean in Revelation 2?

A Overcoming refers to remaining faithful to Christ during persecution, false teaching, and cultural pressure (1 John 5:4-5). Those believers were living during the trials leading up to the judgment events of that generation.

Q What is the second death mentioned in Revelation 2:11?

A The second death refers to final separation from God (Revelation 20:14). Those who remained faithful to Christ would never experience that judgment.

Q Why does Jesus say He is walking among the lampstands?

A The lampstands represent the churches (Revelation 1:20). Christ walking among them shows He is actively present with

His people, observing their works and correcting their failures.

Q Why does Jesus warn about removing the lampstand?

A The lampstand represents the church's place as a light-bearing witness for Christ. If they refused to repent, they would lose their standing and influence as a church (Matthew 5:14-16).

Q Who were the Nicolaitans?

A Early Christian writers such as Irenaeus said the Nicolaitans promoted compromise with pagan idolatry and immoral behavior (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.3). Christ specifically said He hated their deeds.

Q What does the tree of life represent in Revelation 2:7?

A The tree of life points back to Eden where humanity originally had access before the fall (Genesis 2:9; Genesis 3:22-24). Through Christ, access to life was restored.

Q Why is Pergamum called the place where Satan's throne is?

A Pergamum was a major center of emperor worship and pagan temples in the Roman world. Believers living there were surrounded by intense pressure to participate in idolatry.

Q Who was Antipas?

A Antipas was an early Christian martyr in Pergamum who remained faithful to Christ even when facing death. His example showed the level of persecution some believers faced.

Q Why does Christ warn Thyatira about Jezebel?

A Jezebel symbolizes corrupt teaching inside the church. Just as the Old Testament Jezebel led Israel into idolatry, false teachers in Thyatira were leading believers into compromise (1 Kings 16:31).

Q What is the hidden manna mentioned in Revelation 2:17?

A Hidden manna represents God's spiritual provision for the faithful, echoing the manna God provided Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14-15; John 6:32-35).

Q What is the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17?

A In ancient courts a white stone was often used to represent acquittal or acceptance. The promise symbolizes Christ declaring the believer accepted and vindicated.

Q What is the morning star mentioned in Revelation 2:28?

A The morning star refers to Christ Himself (Revelation 22:16). It represents the light of the new covenant age that followed the passing of the old covenant system.

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Revelation 2:1-29; Genesis 3:22-24; Acts 19:23-27; Acts 20:29-30; Hebrews 4:12-13; 1 Corinthians 13:1-2; Psalm 2:8-9; Numbers 25:1-3; Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Kings 16:31; 1 John 5:4-5; Revelation 20:14; Revelation 22:16

† Strabo, Geography 14.1.20; Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1.26.3; Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp 12-15; Eusebius,

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