

Exhortation of our Loving Lord

1. Text: Rev. 1:12-18

- a. [12] Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; [13] and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw* one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. [14] His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. [15] His feet *were* like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters. [16] In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. [17] When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, [18] and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

2. Intro

- a. Last time:
 - i. Futurist understanding of Revelation
 - 1. Four approaches to Revelation:
 - a. Idealism, preterism, historicism, and futurism
 - 2. The language of Revelation 1 points to a futurist view of R4-22.
 - a. Cf. R1:1, 3, 7, 19.
 - 3. Imminence best describes Jesus' coming
 - a. Can break through any time
 - b. Matt. 4:17, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"
 - i. 1 Pet. 4:7, "The end of all things is near"
 - ii. James 5:8, "the coming of the Lord is near"
 - c. Eschatological language of "the last days," "the last time(s)," and "the last hour."
 - ii. John's vision of the glorious Christ
 - 1. Picture of Christ at His second coming
 - a. Sun shining face: Glory

- i. Matt. 16:27-28, “the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father... those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”
 - ii. Matt. 17:2, “His face shone like the sun”
 - b. Sword out of His mouth: Destruction
 - i. R19:15 “From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations”
 - ii. R19:21 “And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse”
 - c. Flaming eyes: Evaluation
 - i. R19:12 [12] His eyes *are* a flame of fire
 - d. Feet of burnished bronze: Authority
 - i. R19:15, “He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty”
 - 1. “tread” is *pateō* (πατέω) which comes from the noun “foot,” *pous* (πούς).
 - 2. Pictured in Ps. 110:1, “I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet”
 - 3. Cf. also Ps. 8:6; Mt. 22:44; Acts 2:35; 1 Cor. 15:24-27; Heb. 1:13.
- 2. Picture of Christ as the High Priest of heaven
 - a. Decked out in priestly attire (robe and sash)
 - b. The only mediator between God and man
 - i. R5:9, “You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue...”
 - ii. 1 Tim. 2:5, “there is one God, *and* one mediator between God and man”
 - iii. Apart from Christ, man faces judgment day without a Savior and all alone.
 - c. Cares for the lampstands before the holy God.
 - i. Lev. 24:3 [3] “Outside the veil of testimony in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall keep it in order from

evening to morning before the LORD continually...
[4] "He shall keep the lamps in order on the pure
gold lampstand before the LORD continually.

- ii. Maintains the lamps on the golden lampstands and keeps them from growing dim or burning out.
- iii. Jesus cares for the churches (R1:20) to ensure they burn bright and hot before the holy God.

1. Focus of R2-3

b. Today

- i. R2-3 is Jesus' care for the churches
- ii. Title: "Exhortations of our Loving Lord"
- iii. From the Lord Jesus
 - 1. Each letter begins with an identifying mark of Jesus.
 - a. Largely an echo of what John saw in R1
 - 2. He prepares His elect for His imminent coming.
 - a. Only Christians believe and heed Jesus' warnings.
 - b. Unbelievers see as irrelevant, impractical, an overreaction
 - 3. He wants none to perish but for all to repent (2 Pet. 2:9).
- iv. From Him who loves us
 - 1. Rev 1:5 [5] To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—
 - 2. Rev 3:19 [19] 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline...
 - 3. The words of Jesus who gave up His life to save sinners out of love
- v. Exhortations
 - 1. Ephesus, R2:5 [5] 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first...
 - 2. Smyrna, R2:10 [10] 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer...
 - 3. Pergamum, R2:16 [16] 'Therefore repent...
 - 4. Thyatira, R2:25 [25] 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.
 - 5. Sardis, R3:2 [2] 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die...

6. Philadelphia, R3:11 [11] 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
7. Laodicea, R3:19 [19] 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

vi. Universal application:

1. Addressed to the seven but meant for all

- a. Resounding refrain universally applies each exhortation to other the churches as well
 - i. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (R2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
- b. "to the churches" expands application to others in addition to the original church addressed.
 - i. Common NT expectation (1 Cor. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 4:16; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22; Tit. 3:15)
- c. Jesus' words on earth, "he who has ears let him hear" (Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:9; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35).
 - i. What He said on earth, He now speaks from heaven through His Spirit for all the churches (R2:23).

2. These seven letters have relevance to all because the spiritual issues addressed are common to all.

- a. The right way to read these letters (and all of NT) is with the attitude of humble self-examination, asking yourself, "Is this spiritual problem evident in my life?" rather than dismissing them as irrelevant because they were addressed to another people.

3. Letters to the churches

- a. All seven letters follow a particular structure
 - i. Helps give perspective on the more obscure things
- b. Structure:
 - i. Instruction (for John to write)
 - ii. Identification (of Jesus the speaker)
 - iii. Commendation (except for Laodicea)
 - iv. Diagnosis (of the church's spiritual condition)

- v. Exhortation (to each church)
 - vi. Invitation (for all to heed the Spirit's words)
 - vii. Promise (of heaven for overcomers)
 - c. For the sake of time, we will only highlight with each letter its commendation, diagnosis, exhortation, and promise.
4. #1 Ephesus: First Love
- a. Commendation:
 - i. R2:2-3 [2] 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them *to be* false; [3] and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.
 - 1. Jesus commends them for
 - a. Maintaining purity of doctrine (again in 2:6)
 - b. Rejecting evildoers and imposters in the church
 - c. Enduring for Christ (not grow weary)
 - 2. Not because all their works were good.
 - a. Forsook their first love (R2:4)
 - b. Forsook first deeds (R2:5)
 - 3. But because the Lord does not singularly focus on our failures
 - a. Consider the heart of Christ seen in Paul's letters
 - b. Diagnosis:
 - i. R2:4 [4] 'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.
 - ii. "first love"
 - 1. "First" as in time, what they practiced as new believers
 - a. They were to remember (2:5)
 - b. They were to repeat their first deeds (2:5)¹
 - iii. Toward whom might this love be directed?
 - 1. Love for the Lord or love for the brethren?

¹ First love had with it corresponding deeds (2:5, "do the deeds you did at first"). This is set in contrast to the description of Thyatira in 2:19 ("your deeds of late are greater than at first"). Instead of growing toward greater deeds, their deeds had degenerated and disappeared.

2. In Scripture these two are intertwined:

- a. Not to say that loving neighbor excuses you from loving Christ or that the latter absolves you from the former.
- b. But rather that in Scripture, the lover of Christ always strives to love his neighbor and no one can truly and biblically love his neighbor unless he loves Christ.
- c. You cannot love Christ and not love His body, the church (John 21:15-17; 1 John 4:20-21).

iv. What kind of love?

1. Not only emotions or zeal:

- a. Not *philia* (φιλία), the love of emotions and affections

2. But commitment and action

- a. *agapē* (ἀγάπη), the love of commitment and action
- b. Called to repeat certain actions
 - i. R2:5 [5] repent and do the deeds you did at first

v. What might these deeds be?

1. Deeds of personal obedience to Christ

- a. John 14:15 [15] "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

2. From this love flows loving deeds toward God's people

- a. John 13:34 [34] "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

3. A converted man loves Christ so as to obey Him from the heart

- a. Rom. 6:17 [17] But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

vi. Personal obedience confirms true conversion and true love for Christ

1. Obedience = studying the will of God in the Bible and living it out

- a. Not merely what you think is right or vaguely biblical, but what God actually said

2. Deeds (or "works," *ergon* [ἔργον]) confirm what's in your heart

- a. A man may say he loves his wife and he may have feelings for her, but if he is unfaithful to her, his love is false.
- b. Your actions prove what is truly in your heart.
- c. Loving Christ is shown by your personal obedience.

3. What true converts do

- a. They earnestly seek to understand the will of God (therefore, the Bible) to faithfully live it out (Matt. 28:20; John 8:31; Acts 2:42).
- b. Obedience to Christ as the mark of true conversion seen in Acts 5:32; Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:26; Heb. 5:9.
- c. No one is baptized at FCC who does not seek the Lord with this attitude of obedience, not sinless perfection (no such a thing) but an earnest pursuit of personal obedience.
- d. Obedience is the mark of justifying faith (James 2:21).

c. Exhortation:

- i. R2:5 [5] '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 will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.
- ii. “remember from where you have fallen”
 - 1. Replay in their minds their love for Him at first
 - 2. Also “do the deeds you did at first”
 - 3. Make it right with the Lord with their actions
- iii. “I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place”
 - 1. An existential threat for the church
 - a. “the seven lampstands are the seven churches” (R1:20)
 - b. To remove the lampstand is to snuff out the church
 - 2. The downfall of every church is its forsaking of love for the Lord and personal obedience to Him.
 - a. Essentially to cease being Jesus’ disciples (Matt. 28:19-20)
 - b. Forsake this and become a religious institution of creeds and ecclesial practices without godliness, presence of the holy God, true worship, personal trust in Him, and true joy.
 - c. Abandon first love and become a sinking ship.

3. Gauge of first love:
 - a. Honor Christ in each area of your life, in the boardroom, in the classroom, in the family room, in the bedroom.
 - b. Honor Christ with your calendar and your checkbook.
 - c. Honor Christ with your mind and with your body.
 - i. Not only present your body a living and holy sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), but also take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)
 4. Do not forsake your first love but repent if you have grown lax.
- d. Promise:
- i. R2:7 [7] ... To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'
 - ii. "who overcomes": overcome lovelessness and disobedience
 1. Jesus is the true overcomer (R3:21) who obeyed the Father (Phil. 2:8). All who are one with Him overcome as they abide in Him (John 15:5-8).
 2. No overcomer, no heaven. Strive to enter (Lk. 13:24).
 3. Eternity is on the balance. Seen in the following words:
 - iii. "the tree of life"
 1. Tree of life is what Adam and Eve would've eaten from had they not violated the law of God (Gen. 2:9; 3:22).
 2. Tree of life reappears in the New Jerusalem (R22:2, 14, 19).
 - iv. "the Paradise of God"
 1. Paradise is *paradeisos* (παράδεισος)
 2. Paradise describes
 - a. Eden (Gen. 2:8-9 in the LXX)
 - b. Heaven, or "the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2-4)
 - c. Where the souls of saints are immediately after death (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-24; 2 Cor. 5:8)
 - d. The New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven when the world is recreated (R21:1-2)

- v. Heaven is for those who love the Lord (James 1:12; Rom. 8:28) and obey Him (John 3:36; Heb. 5:9).

5. #2 Smyrna: Persecution

a. Commendation:

- i. R2:9 [9] 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
- ii. "tribulation"
 - 1. Normal Christian suffering, not "great tribulation" (R2:22; 7:14)
 - 2. John 16:33 [33] In the world you have tribulation...
 - 3. Acts 14:22 [22] "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."
- iii. "poverty"
 - 1. Christians frequently suffered financial loss for Christ
 - a. Cf. Matt. 16:25; Mark 10:29-30; Luke 6:20-26; Phil. 3:8; Heb. 10:32-34
 - 2. But possess eternal riches ("but you are rich")
 - a. Eph. 1:3, "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"
 - b. Unlike the Laodiceans who thought they were rich but were poor in the sight of the Lord (R3:17)
- iv. "blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan"
 - 1. Slandered by unconverted Jews
 - a. Unconverted Jews are distinct from true spiritual Jews (Rom. 2:28-29).
 - b. To Jesus, their synagogue belonged to Satan, because they opposed the truly converted people of God (cf. Gen. 3:15).
 - 2. Satanic attack
 - a. As Satan was most interested in Adam and Eve in Eden, so he is in God's prized possession on earth, His church.
 - b. Christians often face blasphemy (same as slander).

- i. Matt. 5:11 [11] "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
 - v. Those who stand up and stand firm for Christ will face slander from the unbelieving world under the sway of the Devil.
- b. Exhortation:
 - i. R2:10 [10] 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast 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.
 - ii. "Do not fear what you are about to suffer"
 - 1. Suffering is an aspect of our fellowship with Christ.
 - a. John himself attests to this
 - i. R1:9 [9] I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God...
 - b. Jesus took our shame on the cross; He now calls us to join ourselves to Him and partake in His suffering.
 - i. Matt. 16:24 [24] If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.
 - ii. Phil. 3:10 [10] that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...
 - iii. Rom. 8:16-17 [16] The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.
 - 2. "Do not fear"
 - a. Fear is overcome by faith in the Lord who assures us we need not fear.
 - i. John 14:1 [1] "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

- b. The solution to our fears is to know that God is bigger.
 - i. Trust in Him and be unafraid of pain and suffering
 - ii. Like injections and surgery from a doctor you trust
 - iii. “you will have tribulation for ten days”:
 - 1. Tribulation as in Christian suffering, not the great tribulation
 - iv. “Be faithful unto death.”
 - 1. Jesus calls His disciples to endure, if need be, even unto death
 - 2. It is better to lose one’s life in this life and gain it for eternity.
 - a. Matt. 16:25 [25] “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.
 - 3. Stand firm and resist (Eph. 6:13, “resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm”)
 - c. Promise:
 - i. R2:10 [10] ... I will give you the crown of life
 - 1. Look ahead to eternity in heaven (James 1:12).
 - 2. Similar encouragements elsewhere in Scripture:
 - a. 2 Cor. 4:16-17 [16] ... though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. [17] For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,
 - 3. Suffering in this life is the bitter medicine for an eternal benefit.
 - a. Perspective of faith: Those who believe the word of God endure the momentary affliction because they believe the eternal good/payoff that far outweighs the temporal pain.
 - ii. R2:11 [11] ... He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’
 - 1. “who overcomes”: overcome suffering
 - 2. Not harmed is not wronged (*adikeō* [ἀδικέω]).
 - 3. The second death is the lake of fire, hell (R21:8; cf. R20:14).
 - 4. Believers have their sins already paid for by Christ.
 - a. They will not be unjustly punished against for the sins for which Jesus already died. There is no double jeopardy with the righteous God. There is no hell for true believers.

6. #3 Pergamum: False Teaching

a. Commendation:

- i. R2:13 [13] 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
 1. Jesus knows what they endured.
 2. A martyr was once a member at this church.
 - a. Jesus does not forget those died for His name.
 - b. Ps. 116:15 [15] Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.
 3. Jesus is fully aware of the Satanic assaults on a church.

b. Diagnosis:

- i. R2:14-15 [14] 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold 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 *acts of immorality*. [15] 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
 1. Endurance of persecution does not excuse false teaching.
 2. "Some" (2x) hold to the teaching of Balaam and of Nicolaitans.
 - a. Nicolaitans are unknown today
 - b. Some connect it to Nicolas (Acts 6:5).
 - c. Antinomian ("so ... also ... in the same way") per Irenaeus²
 3. Like Israel whom Balaam seduced into immorality and idolatry, so these led the church into the same vices.
 4. "Hold" is *krateō* (κρατέω) which means to grasp tightly (R2:1, 13)
 - a. Never hold fast to any teaching that permits moral laxity.
 - b. Example: Twist doctrine of justification to render sanctification optional. Sanctification is an essential part of salvation in Scripture. No heaven without it (Heb. 12:14).

² [Irenaeus, Against Heresies 1:26:3] The Nicolaitans are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, [when they are represented] as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practise adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

c. Exhortation:

- i. R2:16 [16] 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.
 - 1. Repentance is Jesus' call. This is the call to put away the false teaching and hold fast to the truth revealed in Scripture.
 - 2. Jesus distinguishes the church ("you") from "the some" who hold to these false teachings.
 - 3. The church must repent and put out false doctrines.
 - 4. Jesus will war against the "some" with wrath (R19:15, 21).

d. Promise:

- i. R2:17 [17] ... To him who overcomes, to him 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 but he who receives it.'
- ii. "who overcomes": overcome false doctrine
- iii. "white stone"
 - 1. Perhaps a token of vindication or acquittal, a token to be traded later for a reward, or a token of admission into the feast in the messianic kingdom
 - 2. Regardless of what it means, it points to heaven.
- iv. "new name... which no one knows but he who receives it"
 - 1. Perhaps the name of Jesus per R19:12
- v. "hidden manna"
 - 1. May be an allusion to the jar of manna in the ark. So Jesus is also the bread of life in heaven hidden from earth until His return.
 - 2. In the same way that Jesus is the morning star (2:28; 22:16) and He gives Himself to His people, so with this picture of manna.
 - 3. Heaven is to have Jesus forever in union with Him (R19:7).

7. #4 Thyatira: Immorality

a. Commendation:

- i. R2:19 [19] 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.
 - 1. They have spiritually matured and grown.

b. Diagnosis:

- i. R2:20-23 [20] '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 *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. [21] 'I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. [22] '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. [23] 'And I will kill her children with pestilence, 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.
- ii. "tolerate" (*aphiēmi*, ἀφίημι)
 1. Never tolerate immorality in the church. Toleration is complicity.
 2. No place for it in church (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5-6).
 3. Remove through the process of discipline.
 - a. 1 Cor. 5:13 [13] REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.
- iii. "Jezebel"
 1. She was an evil and idolatrous wife of Ahab, the king of Israel.
 2. She had no moral boundaries and even had a man murdered to take his vineyard and gift it to her husband (1 Kings 21:7-16).
 3. Jesus assigns her name to the immoral woman in Thyatira.
 4. There is opportunity for all to repent, receive forgiveness, and be converted to Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). Once converted, zero tolerance.
- iv. "I gave her time to repent"
 1. The opportunity for repentance does not last forever (Is. 55:6).
 2. But she does not want (οὐ θέλει) to repent.
 3. People do not repent, because they do not want to do so.
 4. They love sin and independence from the holy God (John 3:19).
- v. "I will kill her children with pestilence"
 1. "Her children" describe her followers, not her literal offspring.
 2. The Lord puts to death those who persist in sinning against Him.
 - a. Global Flood (Gen. 6:5-7)

- b. Ex. 34:7, “He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished”
 - c. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10)
 - d. Those who dishonored the Lord’s table (1 Cor. 11:30)
- vi. “all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts”
 - 1. Judgment of unrepentant churches would result in the fear of the LORD among all the churches (Acts 5:11).
 - 2. Like the nations when Egypt was judged with plagues and her army drown in the Red Sea, just as Rahab knew (Josh. 2:9-11) as well as the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:9-10).
 - 3. Heb. 4:13, “all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”
 - 4. Jesus searches our minds and our hearts.
- vii. “great tribulation”
 - 1. Jesus called the eschatological wrath of God during the final seven years of this age the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21).
 - 2. Imminent “great tribulation” is for those who reject the word of God and refuse to repent, especially, those who antagonize the true people of God (R19:2).
- c. Exhortation:
 - i. R2:24-25 [24] '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. [25] 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.
 - 1. True believers reject false teaching.
 - 2. They were to hold fast to the true gospel and remain faithful.
 - 3. They were to maintain their purity from immorality.
- d. Promise:
 - i. R2:26 [26] 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; [27] AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received *authority* from My Father; [28] and I will give him the morning star.
 - 1. Scripture quotation is from Ps. 2 which is about Christ’s reign.

2. All who are one with Christ will reign with Him (R20:4; 22:5).
3. "Morning star"
 - a. Jesus gives Himself to His people (R22:16).
 - b. Heaven is to be with Jesus (Phil. 1:23, "to be with Christ")

8. #5 Sardis: Deadness

- a. Zero commendation
- b. Diagnosis:
 - i. R3:1 [1] ... 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.
 1. An overrated church
 2. May have had excitement and energy
 3. But no genuine faith and real obedience to the Lord
 4. "dead" refers to spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13).
 - a. Sin kills the soul of the sinner (James 5:20).
 - b. Sin deceives and hardens (Heb. 3:13) and drags into death and hell (James 1:14-15).
 - c. They heard the word but forgot and did not repent (R3:3).
- c. Exhortation:
 - i. R3:2-3 [2] 'Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. [3] 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.
 - ii. "Wake up"
 1. The need for spiritual alertness/wakefulness/sobriety occurs often in Scripture: Rom. 13:11; Eph. 5:14; 1 Thess. 5:6; 1 Pet. 5:8.
 - a. Take the word of God seriously and take action.
 2. "if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you"
 - a. If they remain asleep, the Lord's coming will be like a thief (1 Thess. 5:4). The rapture will be a rude awakening. They were ill-prepared for Christ.

- b. Instead of rapture, they will face the great tribulation.
 - i. Amos 5:18-20 [18] Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light; [19] As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. [20] *Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?
 - ii. Coming of Christ will be destruction, not safety.
- iii. “remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent”
 - 1. They had heard the truth. Now they must recall and repent.
 - 2. Their deeds were incomplete in the sight of God (R3:2).
 - a. They had good intentions but they failed to act.
 - b. Actions prove the genuineness of your faith (James 2).
 - c. Matt. 3:8 [8] "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;
- d. Promise:
 - i. R3:4-5 [4] 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. [5] 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
 - ii. Those who walk in white are those who have not soiled their garments.
 - 1. Not sinless perfection (never sinned) but justified and sanctified.
 - a. The garments are white by washing in Jesus' blood R7:14, “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”).
 - b. Cleansing leads to practical righteousness (R19:8, “fine linen, bright and clean... is the righteous acts of the saints”).
 - 2. Jesus came for sinners
 - a. Luke 5:32 [32] "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

- b. Luke 19:10 [10] "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
 - 3. Picture of justification and sanctification; cannot have one without the other.
 - a. Heb. 10:14 [14] For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.
 - b. Calvin, "Christ justifies no one whom He does not at the same time sanctify."
 - iii. The few are known by name by the Lord.
 - 1. He knows each of His sheep by name (John 10:3).
 - 2. Not erase the name means that the names are permanent.
 - a. Jesus does not say that He will erase but that He won't.
 - b. Eternal security is a solid doctrine of Scripture (John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-30). These words should not be pressed to deny eternal security.
9. #6 Philadelphia: Perseverance
- a. Commendation/Diagnosis:
 - i. R3:8 [8] 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.
 - 1. Open door refers to entrance into heaven, either/both for their own salvation or for others evangelized by them.
 - 2. Jesus does not assess the church by its power, that is, its wealth, size, ability, or impact.
 - 3. He looks at the church's faithfulness ("kept My word"), whether she keeps His word and confesses His name ("not denied").
 - ii. R3:10 [10] 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
 - 1. "the word of My perseverance"
 - a. Jesus taught us to persevere, esp. persecution.
 - i. Matt. 10:22 [22] "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.

- ii. Matt. 24:13 [13] "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.
 - iii. Luke 21:19 [19] "By your endurance you will gain your lives.
 - b. Philadelphia persevered through the persecution at the hand of the unconverted Jews.
- 2. The "hour of testing" is the great tribulation
 - a. Great tribulation is worldwide ("upon the whole world").
 - b. The faithful are kept "from the hour of testing."
 - i. "from" is literally "out of," *ek* (ἐκ).
 - ii. The faithful are kept out of the great tribulation through the rapture.
 - c. Called "the hour of testing" because it will reveal people's true spiritual condition.
 - i. "Test" reveals the true nature of something.
 - ii. In the great tribulation people's refusal to repent will become crystal clear (R9:20, 21; 16:9, 11).
 - iii. Many who say "Lord, Lord" will be shown false.
- b. Exhortation:
 - i. R3:11 [11] 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
 - 1. The Lord assures them that His coming is imminent.
 - 2. They are to hold fast to their faithfulness and persevere.
 - 3. "Crown" points to heaven (R2:10; cf. James 1:12).
- c. Promise:
 - i. R3:12 [12] 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.
 - 1. "make him a pillar in the temple of My God"
 - a. Christians will become a permanent fixture in the house of God ("he will not go out from it anymore").

- b. The word for “pillar” is *stulos* (στῦλος) which is used in the LXX for the tabernacle structural support (boards and pillars [Ex. 26-27]). It is also used of the pillars in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 7).

2. “I will write on him the name of My God”

- a. Name of God being on the foreheads (cf. R14:1) is set in contrast to the name of the Beast (R13:16).
- b. Christians will bear God’s name as the insignia that they are His own possession (Eph. 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Ex. 19:5).

10. #7 Laodicea: Lukewarmness

a. No commendation

b. Diagnosis:

- i. R3:15 [15] 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. [16] 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

1. Lukewarm water well known in Laodicea.

- a. The city’s water supply came from hot springs six miles away. The water became tepid when it reached the city.
- b. The substance is earnestness (needed to “be zealous” R3:19) in their walk with the Lord.
- c. They were complacent, even conceited (R3:17), and felt no twinge of conscience to repent and seek the Lord.

2. “spit” is *emeō* (ἐμέω), translated as “vomit” (NKJV, NET, Lexham).

- a. The Lord has no taste for those who do not earnestly seek to learn His word and respond with faith and repentance.
- ii. R3:17 [17] 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

1. Delusional

- a. Blind to their true spiritual condition
- b. Thought highly of their temporal riches and strength
 - i. Wealth has a way of imparting a false sense of self-sufficiency—the very antithesis of the poverty of spirit commended by the Lord (Matt. 5:3).

- ii. 1 Tim. 6:17 [17] Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.
- c. But they were in reality “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” before God.
- c. Exhortation:
 - i. R3:18 [18] I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.
 - 1. “advise”
 - a. Jesus diagnoses the malady and prescribes its remedy.
 - 2. “buy from Me gold refined by fire... and white garments”
 - a. He calls them to obtain from Him true riches, not the false riches of this world.
 - b. Refined gold is Christian character refined through affliction (cf. Job 23:10; 1 Pet. 1:6-7).
 - c. Luxury is not known for its character-building qualities.
 - d. “white garments” refer to justification and sanctification.
 - e. “Buy from Me” is later “be zealous and repent.” These two are one and the same.
 - ii. R3:19 [19] 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
 - 1. The rebuke and correction come by way of Jesus’ love.
 - 2. It is love that disciplines, not hatred (Heb. 12:6, “THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES”).
 - 3. “be zealous and repent” shows the nature of their complacency.
 - a. They were indifferent to the Lord’s words.
 - b. They did not take Jesus’ words seriously so as to repent.
- d. Promise:
 - i. R3:20-21 [20] 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. [21] 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down

with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

1. Jesus stands outside the church.
2. Invitation to anyone who heeds His voice and opens the door.
3. Even if the church at large rejects the true Christ, anyone who heeds His word will enter the kingdom of God.
 - a. Dining and reigning refer to the kingdom of Christ
 - i. The marriage supper of the Lamb (R19:9)
 - ii. Sit on thrones to reign with Christ (R20:4).

11. Conclusion

- a. He speaks to those who would heed and respond with faith and repentance.
- b. Jesus knows the future, that judgment is coming, and prepares His elect.
- c. He does not wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).
- d. The Lord speaks severe words of admonition out of His great love for His elect.
 - i. J. C. Ryle, "But from whose lips did these *severe* words come? They came from the lips of One who loves us with a love that *surpasses* knowledge, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were spoken by One who so loved us that He left heaven for our sakes—came down to earth for our sakes—lived a poor, humble life, for three and thirty years on earth for our sakes—went to the cross for us, went to the grave for us, and died for our sins. The words that come from lips like these, must surely be words of love."
- e. No greater proof of love than to warn your beloved of an impending danger
 - i. Think of father who cries "Stop!" to his little boy tottering toward the brink of a cliff, or a mother who cries "Stop!" to her little child about to take a swig of Clorox bleach. The alarm may sound unpleasant and harsh, yet it is not for that reason hatred. Their shriek is the sound of love.
 - ii. A child thinks the shouting of his father or mother is hateful because he doesn't understand the seriousness of the fall or the deadliness of the poison. And here is the key to properly understand AND apply these severe words of our loving Lord.
 1. Sin is no mild allergen, but a deadly poison for the soul.
 2. Sin is no slide down a gentle slope, but a deadly cliff.
- f. Jesus speaks these warnings and threats out of love to steer us from danger.

- i. Jesus addresses issues of: First Love, Persecution, False Teaching, Immorality, Deadness, Perseverance, and Lukewarmness.