

## The Revelation 2

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 31 October 2013 09:14

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When John relates the words of Jesus to the seven churches, he reiterates the things he has seen in his vision, beginning with Jesus holding the seven stars in His right hand, and then repeating the various parts to his readers. This has nothing to do with using a useful teaching method! It is to do with faithfully repeating what Jesus told him to say. Too many preachers today, including pastors, rely on methods and techniques. When I cast these aside over two decades ago I lost all the churches I once preached in, but gained spiritual integrity!

### Verses 1-4

1.

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2.

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3.

And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Firstly, John had to deliver a written warning to the church at Ephesus. Jesus Himself repeated portions of the vision as a part of the message – that the One giving the message was the very One Who held the seven stars in His right hand, and Who moved amidst the seven candlesticks: they only exist and live because of His will. This was John's absolute authority, for only God could do this. It is also our assurance: when we preach or witness we may only base our words on scripture, as it is written, and interpret in similar manner. Unfortunately, many base their words on emotions, spiritualisation and theories - their own ideas instead of the word of God.

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At this juncture I warn readers who are preachers not to spiritualise God's word; they may only repeat what God actually says. Sadly, the Revelation is grossly spiritualized by men and women intent on gaining a readership or following, for their own ends. In truth, a true preacher is given the words to use at the time, making what he says fresh and vibrant. Everything else is just technique and worthless.

It is also common for people to make scripture say what it does not say, even though they use scripture as their base! That is, they read the actual words but make it mean whatever their finite minds wish it to say, whether through personal ignorance, following a trend or favoured preacher, or reading selected books. Let our words only be those of the One Who holds the stars and walks among the candlesticks, before He shuts our mouths and removes us from His blessings!

Why does Jesus tell John to give this message to the "angel of the church of Ephesus"? Some might think He refers to one of the seven 'stars' or angels He has under His command. I believe this to be an error, because of the words He used, and that He is referring to the bishop/pastor of the Ephesus church. How do I know? After all, He says He is talking to the "angel of the church".

The answer is this: the word used for 'angel' is the same word used for 'angels' in chapter one. But, the definition is different. In chapter one it means the Heavenly spirits, angels who inhabit Heaven. In this text, it refers to the pastor of the church at Ephesus. "Angel", the noun, *aggelos* (which is, by the way, masculine; there is never mention of female Heavenly angels) can indeed mean an Heavenly angel, but it can also mean, simply, an envoy or messenger (from *angelo*

: "to deliver a message"; this is the most basic task of Heavenly angels, as well as of humans) from God. In the strictest sense this messenger can be sent by God, a man such as a king, or even Satan, through his demons or their occultic works.

As is always the norm, the context defines the meaning. In this way, then, a preacher is an *aggelos*

or angel. Some argue against this interpretation, but I suggest it is the case, for the very next verses, 2 and 3, describe the work not of an Heavenly angel but of a pastor ("I know thy works"). And, on top of that, Jesus says He has "somewhat against thee" because he has lost his first love. None of this can possibly apply to an Heavenly angel! For these reasons I interpret 'angel' in this and similar texts as referring to the pastors, or, rather, the main pastor, sometimes

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called a bishop or elder. They are all the same thing.

Jesus begins by telling Ephesus what it has done well and good, and follows it with what is wrong. No, this is not a ministerial technique! Nor is it a usual 'management ploy' used in business ("You have performed very well.... But..."; and so you know something bad is coming!)! It is simply how Jesus decided to speak. It should not be used as a pastoral method when dealing with fellow believers.

Jesus said He knew of the work at Ephesus: how they labored to preach, the patience they had in their times of trials, and how they "canst not bear" those who are evil. They also examined those who claimed to be apostles, "and are not", finding them to be liars. Oh how I wish men would do that today! "Apostle" is another factor that is often grossly misrepresented. There were the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus; one was shamed and cast away from the number (Judas) and someone else took his place. These were the foundational apostles who will be founders of the great building/Church of believers in Heaven.

Then, there were 'other' apostles, such as Apollos and Barnabas. We are told of Apollos that he was an eloquent speaker and, more importantly, "mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24). He was so mighty he was ranked alongside Peter and Paul (1 Corinthians 1:12) and Paul wanted to send him to the brethren (1 Corinthians 16:12). Barnabas was also known for his greatness in devotion to God. He sold everything he had and gave it all to the Apostles (Acts 4:37). The Church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22). Barnabas, a prophet and teacher, was 'separated' with Paul to do a mighty work (Acts 13:1, 2). And so on. There were others who were known as 'apostles' at that time.

An apostle, *apostolos*, is one sent by others or by God, a messenger, and the word is applied to eminent preachers and teachers of the word of God, whose power is unquestionably godly. Sadly, today, many within the charismatic circle give *themselves* the name of apostle! And foolish folks who listen to them then use it as well, as a title! In reality, an apostle is one God chooses as a prophet (whether of the future, or as an eminent teacher) and preacher, and whom He gifts accordingly. There is no need to add the title to one's name – their gifts and calling will be obvious to all, and will be proved by their diligence and scriptural knowledge and understanding (mere knowledge is nothing, if it is not applied with Holy Spirit understanding). Indeed, no preacher may have a title, whether 'apostle', 'pastor', or 'reverend'. All are equal! (academic titles are very different and prove nothing in the spiritual sense)

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Some, seeing how powerful these apostles were in their spiritual work, and how those they taught accorded them veneration because of their godliness, also wanted the same thing, which, to them, was adulation and financial gain (rather like the modern self-appointed 'apostles'). But, the Church at Ephesus quickly discerned they were fakes and threw them out. The same Church laboured much, had godly patience in times of trouble, and did not give up.

Though all this was commended by Jesus, He said they lacked in a vital ingredient. "I have somewhat against thee... thou hast left thy first love." Jesus did not brandish a whip, but gently admonished them for their own good. Jesus says they lost the original love, using the word *agape*.

To me, this implies that they had kept their love of God, but the love for the brethren was lacking, or perhaps only held superficially. This might have been an effect of going through many trials, but whatever it was, they no longer saw the brethren in a true light.

This can be an easy thing to lose (few appear to have love for the brethren outside their own local church and set of chosen beliefs!), as can be a zeal for the things of God. Many Christians complain of this lack of love for both, failing to see that the remedy is in their own hands... loving the brethren takes practice! It must be genuine, but also experiential. Christians must look at what this love is based on – *agapao*: a welcoming fondness for brethren, a practical welcome that loves them dearly, even when they sin or fall foul of their own faith. Though commonplace, it was enough for Jesus to draw them up short and warn them. It is that serious to the Lord, for He loves all brethren equally and expects us to love in the same way. Don't let your love for the brethren expire slowly, or be damaged by 'circumstances'.

### Verses 5-7

1.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

2.

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

3.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

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This was a gentle but firm warning, to bear in mind “from whence thou art fallen”. That is, their previous love for the brethren. They must repent and go back again to recommit themselves to the brethren. This is vital, even if the brethren are mistaken or are in error. We may not accept their errors, but we must still remember that we, too, are liable to fall in the same way. This change of heart had to be executed quickly, otherwise the Lord said He would “remove (their) candlestick”. This cannot mean they would lose their salvation, so I suggest it means losing Jesus’ commendation, with, perhaps, a loss of blessings. It was essential for them to repent.

Jesus gives another commendation: that they “hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans”, which Jesus also hated. The name, Nicolaitans, means ‘destruction of people’, and should remind us that ANYTHING that opposes God’s word is of the same type and hated by Jesus. The Nikola?tes were followers of a man named Nicolaus, a sect (how quickly they grow!) that followed the error of Balaam, teaching that Christians may eat food dedicated to idols, and commit fornication. (Most sects and cults have a fairly common base of errors). Always remember – we may NOT love or support that which Jesus hates. He hates or detests with ultimate hatred, so we have no business siding with what He hates in any way, for any reason.

This warning to the Church at Ephesus is then applied to all churches (verse 7). So, he that hath an ear should listen to what the Holy Spirit was saying “unto the churches”. As I have already said, though these warnings were given to specific local churches at the time, they also apply, secondarily, but with equal force, to all churches in every age.

Jesus adds that those who “overcometh” will be given the fruit of the tree of life. Many hear what is said by God, through scripture, the Spirit, or preaching, but they do not *listen*, like unruly children who ignore their parents’ counsel. We must overcome these problems and sins, until we are victorious; this involves us holding fast to our faith, no matter what happens or how powerful a foe is. When we thus overcome not just those evils but the sins within, we will eat of the tree of life... we will experience vitality of spiritual life, which is real and powerful, a blessing to the soul, and a builder of faith.

It is the same tree that grows in the “paradise of God”. This is a preposition telling us the tree is a current reality, and not just a figment of the imagination or the tree that disappeared from the original Paradise. Obviously, if the tree now exists, it did not disappear. It also means Paradise is a present reality. This can have one of several meanings, but here it refers to a place pious

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souls are kept until the resurrection. (Some think it is an Heavenly Paradise, but we are unsure of its exact meaning – we only know that it actually exists. See my article on the subject).

### Verses 8-11

1.

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

2.

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

3.

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

4.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Jesus then speaks to the pastor of the church at Smyrna, again repeating Who it was Who gave John the message. Jesus said He was very aware of this church's works, the troubles they endured, and their financial poverty (though they had spiritual riches). He also knew that some claiming to be true Jews, and saved, were acting as if they belonged not to a true synagogue but to the "synagogue of Satan", which is foul. Such Jews were blasphemous and condemned by God. (Evidently, such believers in sin had to be cast out until they repented; this is another failure on the part of modern churches).

Though troubled by these fakers, the Smyrnians must endure, even as some of them are thrown into prison for their faith – how current is this evil! This would try their faith even further, but they must endure. Jesus warns them that they would know a coming attack, which would

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last ten days – hence His warning, so that they could prepare. It is a warning to us all, for a godless hatred of the unsaved can strike us down at any time. Note that it is Satan who is behind this kind of attack. His purpose is simply to break the bonds of love and faith between believers. Some in Smyrna would even die for their faith, but they must stay strong, and they will be rewarded with a “crown of life”. They already had eternal life, but a crown would be added to this, by the Lord, as an emblem of His love and commendation. The fact of an attack was fixed; how we respond to it is within our own souls.

Jesus urges them all to listen carefully to this message, which also applies to all churches in all of time: those who overcome fear shall not be hurt by the second death. That is, they will retain salvation, for the second death is the casting into hell of the unsaved. Thus, their eternal state is assured.

### Verses 12-17

1.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

2.

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

3.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

4.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

5.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

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6.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Now, there is a message for the pastor of the Church at Pergamos, Cyprus. In this message Jesus reminds them that He has a two-edged sword, sharp enough to cut asunder. Jesus acknowledges that, at that time, the city was filled with evil; it was where "Satan's seat is". He says He knows that even in that cess-pit, the Church held up Jesus' name and did not deny its faith, though Antipas was martyred there for the name of the Lord. It did not deter them!

You might think that Pergamos was therefore much favoured – but no! Jesus had "a few things against" this church. Like so many modern churches, the Church at Pergamos did many good things, but spoiled it with sin. In this case, they tolerated amongst them those "that hold the doctrine of Balaam." This was a prophet called by God to prophesy, but was paid by Balak to curse the Hebrews. At first he wanted the large financial gain, but God forced him to bless Israel instead. Thus, Jews thereafter referred to him as an 'abandoned deceiver'.

Many today are of this kind, and deceive the churches, teaching things God hates, from easy acceptance of cults to siding with homosexuals. And many do so because it gives them notoriety, or fame of a sort, or a personal delusion that their attitude is 'godly'. Like the Nicolaitans, these fakers taught to eat food sacrificed to idols and fornication. (Note: Re the food; there is nothing wrong with eating food sacrificed to idols so long as we do not accept the sacrifice or intentions of the cultists. Thus, they took part in the sacrifice). Note that in charismatic circles fornication and adultery are commonplace.

Not only did some in the Pergamos church hold to Balaamite teachings, but they also adhered to the teachings of the Nicolaitans! The warning from Jesus was swift – repent immediately or He would visit them with wrath and use the two-edged sword in condemnation. They, and all the churches, were commanded to hear carefully and apply the remedy. To those who stopped these sins and returned to God truly, Jesus would give the "hidden manna", spiritual sustenance not available to anyone else, a blessing to all who repent and obey.

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Jesus would also give those who thus obey a “white stone” containing a “new name”, known only by God and the one receiving it. This stone is not the same kind as spoken of with Peter and Jesus (the rock, etc), but *psephos*. This is an ancient judgment on people in court: if presented with a black stone, they were guilty and thus condemned; if handed a smooth, white stone, they were deemed innocent and set free.

Even in Jesus' time white stones were used to highlight good days of a feast. And, especially in the words of Jesus here, He was showing commendation to a favoured guest, who was presented with a white stone with his name on it. In this text, the name would be new and known only to Jesus and the recipient. In this way Jesus was giving an honour to those in Pergamos who heeded His warning, and the blessings to the recipient would be secret, between God and him.

### Verses 18-22

1.

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

2.

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

3.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

4.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

5.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

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Thyatira is the next Church to receive Jesus' attention. This time He reminds them of the description given to John – His eyes of fire, that can pierce the very soul and His authority, power, and divine fearsomeness, seen in His feet of brass.

Jesus commends them for their work, charity (love in any form, especially towards the brethren), and service to God, with faith, patience and relevant works... which, he notes, are greater in number or type than His opening words on 'work'. And, as with the others, Jesus has a rebuke. And it is exactly the same as the rebuke given to the previous churches, concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols and encouragement to fornication. Christians are reminded that 'fornication' includes every kind of sexual immorality, and the perversions. Much like today.

In particular, Thyatira is allowing a woman named Jezebel to teach these things. It is ironic that her name means 'chaste'! Some think her name is symbolic for the wicked Queen who was married to Ahab. She was an antinomian who was a self-appointed 'prophetess', but her opposition to God's word proved she was not called by God. This is also how we know modern day 'prophets' and 'apostles' etc., are all fake. Like all who have a silver tongue, she glossed over her lack of calling and purity by saying she was appointed by God, thus seducing others.

Even today, many are seduced thus and are afraid to rebuke what the deceivers call a 'movement of God' or 'God's prophecy'. This is an unnecessary and unbiblical fear, for if we KNOW something is wrong, we must say so! Do not be consumed by guilt by saying so.

It is evident that the Holy Spirit had rebuked her before, whether inwardly or by others, but she refused to repent and stop her sinful sexual activities. This is like a majority today, who think it alright to have sexual relations outside marriage, and do not care if what others see is unacceptable... and this is talking about 'believers'!

Because of her indiscretion and sin, and refusal to repent, the woman would be cast...into a bed. This need not be a real bed, rather it refers to a situation in life that would bring her downfall, and the downfall of those who indulge in the same sexual activities with her. They would know "great tribulation" unless they repent immediately. In our own day millions have tribulation through sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and social misery, etc. Yet, like blind

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fools, they continue to do the same things time and again. Many have their lives taken from them by God, because of this. Repentance – NOT drugs treatment, is the only answer! What is the point of having a treatment that cures, when God has given you over to your lust and sin?

### Verses 23-29

1.

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

2.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

3.

But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

4.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

5.

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

6.

And I will give him the morning star.

7.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

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King David had a child taken from him by death, because of his awful sin. A child need not be sick – if God decides to take a child, He will. In this text we see that Jesus said He would kill the children of the sinful woman who refused to repent. Is this not what is happening today... men, women, and children, are dying in their hundreds or thousands because of adult sexual sin? This sign of God's wrath should be obvious to the churches... but, as we know today, they refuse this sign and instead side with the sexual sinners, not just turning a blind eye to what they do, but promoting and sustaining it. For this they have already lost many blessings, and if they do not repent, God will remove their candlestick from His presence. God does not sleep and He sees everything; and each will be punished according to their sins and acceptance of evildoers.

Jesus says He recognizes that not all in Thyatira are guilty of allowing Jezebel to teach her wicked lies. (It is possible there were some in the satellite churches that refused to accept her). These remain commended by Jesus, Who says He will not require anything else of them... but His warning to those who followed and accepted Jezebel were marked as judged unless they repented. They were very fortunate, for God does not always offer the opportunity to repent and to again receive His blessings!

The truly faithful ones in Thyatira (and in any local church anywhere) are encouraged to stay faithful and to do so until He comes again. As this event is still in the future, it is a warning and an encouragement to every church throughout the ages (as verse 29 proves).

Those who do remain loyal and true will join Jesus in the judgment over the unsaved at the day of judgment. This will be their power over nations/peoples. I suggest that the wording implies this to refer to the end time: "unto the end".

Jesus will rule over the unsaved with a rod of iron: this will occur towards the very end, and at the throne of God during judgment. God will not give any form of compassion when He judges the unsaved before His throne! They will be shattered like pots cast to the ground by a potter – God IS The Potter Who accepts or rejects people as He wishes. This, says Jesus, is what the Father has decided, hell for the unsaved and Heaven for His own. And, those who overcome the sins of their day will be given the morning star.

The 'morning star' is Jesus, the gift to all who are elect and saved, and who remain faithful in

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this life. (False teachers were called 'wandering stars': see Jude 1:13). As the morning star He shows a special interest in His own.

Jesus then finishes this section with the same command as before – those He is speaking to must listen careful to what the Holy Spirit tells them. They must obey and not fail... but if they fail they must repent.

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