

# Living Word Fellowship Church

## Revelation

### An Overview of the Seven Stars and The Seven Churches of Revelation

Dr. Paul Cannings

#### I. An Overview of the 'Seven Stars' and the 'Angels of the Church'.

##### A. The Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7):

1. Strengths: Christ, after affirming that He lives among the churches, lets them know about their accomplishments:
  - a) He compliments them for their hard work that is filled with sweat and fatigue, their endurance, steadfast behavior that is consistent due to their hope in God (perseverance).
  - b) The fact that they did not tolerate evil men, they tested their heart (meaning to see if there is good or evil) of those who called themselves apostles proving (and surprising themselves) that they were false.
  - c) Their longsuffering was not just because of life issues, it was based on their commitment to live for Christ's sake. They did this consistently without becoming sick of being faithful or give up because the various tasks were strenuous and exhausting.
  - d) Jesus continued to complement the church telling them that like Him they despise the deeds of the Nicolaitans. "A heretical sect within the church that had worked out a compromise with the pagan society. They apparently taught that spiritual liberty gave them sufficient leeway to practice idolatry and immorality."
  
2. Weaknesses: Christ would know this because He walks among them and holds up pastors with His right hand (Hebrews 10:24 - "*and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*"; Matthew 22:36-30; 1 John 2:9-10; 4:7-21):
  - a) They turned away from the way they use to love Christ. "Thou hast "remitted" or let down thy early love; that is, it is less glowing and ardent than it was at first.
  - b) The love here referred to is evidently love to the Savior; and the idea is, that, as a church, they had less of this than formerly characterized them. In this respect they were in a state of declension; and, though they still maintained the doctrines of his religion, and opposed the advocates of error, they showed less ardor of affection toward Him directly than they had formerly done." (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)
    - If we love the Lord we would not just know a lot about the Word of God (1 Corinthians 8:1-2; the church of Ephesus was committed to this) we would keep it when our anxieties, fears, depressing moments etc., overwhelm us (1 John 2:3-6).
    - The love is an agape love. A love that puts the need of the other person higher than themselves. It is not interested in other person's desires as much as their need (this is sometimes called charity in the Bible). It is a sacrificial, willful and unselfish love (1 John 3:16-18).

### 3. Consequence:

- a) If they do not do this then He would remove the lampstand (could be the presence of the Holy Spirit – He did not say He would remove the stars – many believe that these are the pastors – ministers – Rom. 10:14-15 - and the churches are lights to the world). Notice He did not say put out the lampstand (In 1997 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary says that there were only three Christians found in Ephesus).

### 4. Overcomers are Blessed:

- a) Christ takes the congregation back to the Garden of Eden where there was only one thing they must not do. If they eat from the tree of life they would be eternally in fellowship with God. Here He is talking about one thing. If they do this they would experience eternal fellowship with Him because He would not remove the lampstand. The tree “generally mean the immortality of the soul, and a final state of blessedness.” (from Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)
- b) Christ is the “Tree of Life” (Revelation 22:2, 14, 19) who is the Word of God (John 1:1-4), the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

## B. The Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11):

### 1. Strengths:

- a) Christ approach to this church took place through the pastor that was established there.
- b) The pastor was held accountable for what is taking place or not taking place.
- c) Whether the church listens to God or not Christ still holds them accountable to His Word and His authority as head of the church. We can ignore what God is saying about His church or not respect His authority but in the end He is still going to hold His church accountable to His Word.
- d) This church was going through a lot of tribulation (tremendous emotional pressure, pain and affliction) and poverty and Christ knew about all of it. He has a reward for those who endure no matter what (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
  - The attacks against them even though it was people coming after them was motivated by Satan. This is another reason it was so intense.
- e) They were challenged to do the following:
  - *“Do not fear what you are about to suffer.”* Christ did not stop the suffering because He then did not provide them their reward. Satan will be punished (Revelation 20) but it is years to come.
  - THANK GOD, the tribulation had a limitation (10 days). The tribulation period is 7 years. Christ says the same for us (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).
  - *“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”* (James 1:12) This seems to review to ongoing trials because the tribulation is going to last 10 days. Faithfulness is required and it is rewarded (Hebrews 11:6).

f) *Second death* - This is described in Revelation 21:8

2. Weaknesses:

- a) No weaknesses - WOW! This in reference of a church that was very poor and being attacked by 'a synagogue of Satan;' meaning a lot of Jews who were apart of the synagogue.
- b) No weaknesses - no weaknesses does not mean they were perfect it means that their faithfulness was sincere because under much tribulation they remained faithful.

3. Consequence:

- a) No consequences because they remained faithful

4. Overcomers are Blessed:

- a) They will be given the crown of life.