

The Seven Church Attitudes Revealed By Christ in the Book of Revelation

Part 1

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation in the Christian Bible we find a powerful message from the now-risen, ascended and glorified Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1-3 [NIV] *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw, that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”*

The words of prophecy we are about to read are what every professing Christian needs to hear, meditate on and act on.

Why?

Revelation 1:4-6 [NIV] *“John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father, to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”*

- 1 Because of who is speaking, Jesus Christ the soon coming King of Kings.
- 2 Because all Christians called at this time are in the future to be teachers of others under Jesus Christ.
- 3 Because we have been redeemed from “death row” where our sins have placed us.

Revelation 1:7-8 [NIV] *“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

The return of Jesus Christ is an event that all living human beings will see and experience.

Most people will mourn at the time of this event, not having nurtured a relationship with Jesus Christ before this event happens.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 [NIV] *“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord for ever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”*

The people described in this passage of scripture are the only ones who will **not** be mourning at Jesus Christ's return.

- 1 Those who have died trusting in Jesus Christ as their Saviour will rise from the graves, resurrected to join Jesus Christ in the clouds.
- 2 Those who are still alive at Jesus Christ's return, who also have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Zechariah 14:4 [NIV] *“On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.”*

On His return the feet of Jesus Christ will stand on the Mount of Olives returning to the same place He ascended from.

Revelation 1:8 [NIV] *“I [Jesus Christ speaking] am the alpha [first] and the omega [last] says the Lord God, who is [the Son of Man enthroned with God the Father] and who was, [the Word of God – see **John 1:1-4**] and who is to come, [Jesus Christ returning to earth] the almighty. [Jesus returning this time as the all-powerful King of Kings to rule the whole earth.]”*

Revelation 1:9-11 [NIV] *“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **On the Lord's Day** I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: “Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”*

Jesus Christ took the apostle John forward in time by giving him a vision of how all humanity would see Jesus Christ on “the Lord's day”, that is the day of His return to earth.

Revelation 1:12-16 [NIV] *“I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and **among the lampstands was someone “like a son of man”**, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash round his chest. His head and hair were white **like** wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were **like** blazing fire. His feet were **like** bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was **like** the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was **like** the sun shining in all its brilliance.”*

Notice how the apostle John was really lost for words to describe the glory and holiness that was before him; how often he used the word “like”.

What John was seeing was outside of the physical realm and a glimpse of the glorious spirit realm.

Revelation 1:17-18 [NIV] *“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

What John saw in vision was terrifying and he had to be reassured by Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:19-20 [NIV] *“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**”*

The commission that John was given by Jesus Christ was first of all to prepare the Christian churches for His future return so that they could be a “kingdom of priests” for Jesus Christ to use at His return.

This command to be prepared for Jesus Christ's return is the first and major message of this revelation given to the churches by Jesus Christ through the apostle John.

The churches referred to were actual Christian fellowships at seven different towns in the early Christian Church of God while John was still alive.

Jesus Christ looking at these seven churches recognised the strengths and weaknesses and He commanded each one to overcome these weaknesses before His return to rule.

For Christians today and in each era since, these different strong and weak attitudes are recorded for us to read, meditate, and act on.

We are all encouraged to increase in what is recorded as good and overcome that which is weak.

As we examine the attitudes of each of these churches we need to ask:-

- 1 Does this describe me?
- 2 Does this describe the church fellowship in which I worship?

Revelation 2:1 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:”*

Each church was reminded as to who was speaking to them, and that everything they were and did was revealed to Him and judged by Him.

First let us read the message as a whole then meditate on what was said and consider the action that needs to be taken by such a Christian or Christian fellowship.

Revelation 2:2-7 [NIV] *“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken your first love.** Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”*

The church at Ephesus was a dedicated and hard working church, who did **not** tolerate false prophets who tried to cause them to reject the gospel message that Paul had brought to this mainly Gentile church when he founded in about AD53.

Paul sent Timothy to serve as their leader, [**1 Timothy 1:3**].

A few years later Paul was made a prisoner in Rome and sent the Ephesian church a letter of encouragement by Tychicus who had visited Paul in Rome.

Paul recognised the weakness of the church members in Ephesus and encouraged them to remember what Christ had done for each of them and to continue to stand firm.

We can read of this encouragement in this letter as recorded in the New Testament.

Ephesus was a busy church, the members did much to benefit themselves and the community.

Many of the founders of the church had died and the second generation of believers were acting out of the wrong motives.

Work for God must be motivated by love for God or it will not last.

As new believers we rejoice at our new found forgiveness in accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but if we begin to lose sight of the seriousness on any sin, we begin to lose the thrill of forgiveness.

2 Peter 1:5-11 [NIV] *“For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.**”*

The church at Ephesus was becoming slack in their spiritual maturing allowing physical service to take priority in their lives.

In our first steps as a Christian we may have enthusiasm without much knowledge as yet of Christian living.

Do we now have more knowledge but lack that original enthusiasm for Bible study and prayer?

We each need to ask how much time do we set aside each day to study the Christian Bible and talk with our Creator, so that the Holy Spirit may work in us to bring us to spiritual maturity?

This is the repentance that Jesus Christ is seeking the “*Ephesus*” like Christian to make.

Note the outcome if we do or do not take notice of this rebuke from our Saviour.

The right or not to eat of the Tree of Eternal Life.

Included in the final part of the message to each of the seven churches is the words “to him that overcomes”.

Every one of the seven churches was told to overcome, so this must refer to more than overcoming their weaknesses.

Let scripture answer this question.

Revelation 12:11 [NIV] *“They overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] and by the word of their testimony [living example or verbal witness] **they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**”*

The death of a martyr may be, but more likely giving up of our time and substance to reach out to others with the Good News which Jesus Christ brought from God the Father.

Well, did you or your church fellowship’s attitude fit that of the Ephesian church?

If so, we know what we should do to prepare ourselves for Christ’s imminent return.

I say imminent because the day of our death is for us the day of Christ’s return in judgement of His church.

1 Peter 4:12-19 [NIV] *“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should*

*not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. **For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?** And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should **commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**”*

Although the Ephesian church was suffering for their loyal physical work for Christ, they still needed to repent of their lack of spiritual work to mature as Christians.