

WRITE TO THE CHURCHES - Rv 2-3

011721P

INTRODUCTION

1. We are always communicating - use of a single word. Jn uses Dan's vocab in Rv 1:19 Dan's *latter days* = Jn's *soon, quickly, near*: now! Not yet too.
2. The way Jn says what he says is important too - how it is said.

1st: Who Are You Talking To?

1. The proper recipients of Revelation: Jesus' fiancé/bride: 1:1; v3; v4; v6; v9; v11; 19-20 Rv is written to you: the church - never forget that.
 - i. Eph 5:25b-27 atonement & eschatology - v31-32
2. We are churchmen - Jesus' Bride - recipients of Jesus' letters.

2nd: Why Did You Say It Like That?

1. 1st of 7 cycles concludes at end of chpt 3.
 - i. Cycle: 1st coming [1:5] & 2nd coming [1:7]. Each letter promises smthg to be given in glory. 3:20-21 *will dine* cld => marriage supper - 19:7-9
 - ii. This cycle focuses on the church until Jesus returns: pressures from outside [persecution] & from inside [compromise] -> apostasy
2. Arranged - mail route, also a "chiasm" [a,b,c,d,c¹,b¹,a¹] - outside & center
Thyatira
Pergamum Sardis
Symrna Philadelphia
Laodicea Ephesus
3. 3 categories: 1] critical condition; 2] compromised; 3] facing persecution; arranged in parallel: critical, persecution, compromise - Thyatira at center.
4. All churches are addressed by each church & all the churches combined
 - i. 2:23 center of chiasm: *all the churches will know*
 - ii. *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*
 - iii. 22:16 Rv is written to the churches.
5. Sober over-all assessment. Not historicist [each church = period of history], but lessons learned from over-all structure of a "cycle" that recapitulates while making linear progress to the end. Lk 18:8; Rv 11; 19-20. Time preceding Jesus' return is dire & dangerous.
6. Realism of warfare: constant summons - *repent!* Eph 2:5; Perg 2:16; Thya 2:22; Sardis 3:3; Lao 3:19. Worship; truth; love; life; light - witness.

3rd: Would You Repeat That Please?

1. The letters connect to Jesus in chpt 1 & glory in chpt 21-22. The entirety of Rv speaks to the churches.
2. Each letter is structured the same: prophetic messages: 7-part template
 - i. The Address: *To the angel of the church in ...write*
 - ii. The Identification of the Author: *the One who... says this.*
 - iii. Evaluation of the condition of the church: *I know (your deeds)...*
 - iv. Praise or Reproof
 - v. Exhortation
 - vi. Command to Hear what Spirit says: *he who has an ear...*

- vii. Promises to Overcomer: *he who overcomes...* (#6 & 7 switch in last 3)
3. Each letter concerns same things: quality of the light emitted by lampstand
 - i. Fidelity to Jesus is the central concern. Jesus knows the deeds of each church & assesses according to facts: calls to persevere in faithfulness.
 - ii. *hear what Spirit says* = content of written letters
 - iii. Each letter calls each disciple to be *an overcomer* = *he* [individual] *who has an ear & hears what HS says to churches* [community].
 - iv. Each letter climaxes w/ prospect of our inheritance - Rv 21:7

Applic #1: Biblical Christianity is Expressed & Experienced as Churchmen

1. I'm grateful for your churchmanship but unsettled by pervasive shoddy churchmanship among professing Xns: dangerous.
2. Which is more important: the one or the many? Zeitgeist teeters back & forth: rugged ind'ism vs identity politics. Church men strive for balance - *you* [plural] *are Christ's body & individually members of it* [1C 12:27], Wm Merrill - 1911 "Rise up O Men of God" [tune #502]

Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings.

Rise up, O men of God!
His kingdom tarries long;
As faithful workmen, watch and pray
And light the night of wrong.

Rise up, O men of God!
The church for you doth wait—
Your strength unequal to the task,
But Christ in you is great!

Lift high the cross of Christ;
Tread where His feet have trod;
As brothers of the Son of man,
Rise up, O men of God!