



REVELATION

Understanding the Apocalypse

Radical Word Bible Study

Episode 15

October 9, 2025



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REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse

Revelation 2025

Opening Comments

- **Check Hard Drive capacity.**
- **Switch to PowerPoint (slide 2) once timer reaches zero.**
- **RECORD**
- Welcome to episode 15 of the Radical Word Bible Study.
- I am Rick Lancaster, and we are coming to you live from our podcasting studio in Murrieta, California at Calvary Chapel French Valley.
- We have a service every Sunday @ 9:30 am.
- We are streaming this Bible Study live on Rumble, Facebook, and YouTube.
- The podcast version of this Bible Study can be found anywhere you go for podcasts.
- It is listed under Radical Word Bible Study with Rick Lancaster wherever you get your podcasts.
- If you are listening to the podcast and would like to tune in to the live stream, you can go to radicalword.com and click on one of the links at the top of the page every Thursday at 6:30pm PST.
- If you are interested in staying up to date with what is happening at The Radical Word, click the link in the description for this video.
- Also, I publish a daily devotional that I send out by email.
- I will include a link to that as well.
- Today is Thursday, October 9, 2025.
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- Turn to **Revelation 1** as we continue a series: **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse.**
- Let's pray now and then get into our text for tonight.
- **Pray**

Teaching

- **REVELATION: Understanding the Apocalypse**

- **Review**
- Let's do a quick review.
- John, the apostle, is on the Island of Patmos, accused of preaching the Word of God and talking about Jesus.
- He is in his nineties and is exiled because he was faithful to Jesus.
- Patmos is a terrible place, desolate and lifeless.
- Even in those very difficult circumstances, John is in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, Sunday.
- Suddenly, a loud voice, as of a trumpet, startles him and he turns to see Jesus in His glorified, heavenly state.
- Last time we left off at verses 17 and 18.
- John turned to see the glorified Jesus and fell down as dead.
- Jesus touched John and told him not to be afraid and then gave four reasons why he should not be afraid.
- **Revelation 1:17-18**
- We talked about the first three last time.
- Go back and watch or listen to episode 14 if you missed it.
- Jesus tells John to not be afraid because He has the keys of Hades and Death.
- Hades = region of departed souls – soul is immortal.
- Death = dominion over the body – occurs when soul departs the body.
- Keys infer authority and access.
- Hades is the equivalent of the Old Testament word Sheol.
- Sheol or Hades is where souls go after death.
- Sheol/Hades is not the same place as Hell.
- Hell is the place of eternal punishment.
- Sheol/Hades is the temporary dwelling place of souls after death.
- **Sheol, Hades, and Hell**
- The Glorified Christ says to John, "I have the keys of Hades and of Death."
- The question that is often posed is, "Are Hades and Hell the same thing?"
- No, they are not.
- And it is important to understand the difference because there is a lot of confusion in the world about this topic.

- As believers, we need to understand our relationship to these places and also of those who are not believers.
- The human soul is immortal.
- At conception life begins.
- Every time a human life is conceived God creates a human soul and that soul is created to live forever; it is immortal.
- The physical body is not.
- Eventually all people will die, except those taken in the Rapture.
- It is where the soul goes after death that makes this topic pertinent to all of us.
- **The abode of the dead.**
- Throughout the Bible, from the earliest pages of Genesis, there is a sense that people knew that the end of physical life was not the end.
- It is also clear that people in the Old Testament didn't have a clear understanding of this topic.
- This is because many doctrines in the Bible were revealed over a great period of time.
- This is called progressive revelation.
- This is one of the reasons we need to read and study the whole Bible.
- **Sheol**
- In the Old Testament the word 'Sheol' (H7585) is used to describe the abode of the dead; the place where the souls of the dead go.
- In the Hebrew this word is used dozens of times.
- It is translated many ways into the English Bibles. "into the grave" Genesis 37:35 – "into the pit" Numbers 16:30 – "Hell" Psalm 55:15 and "Sheol" Psalm 18:5.
- The fact that some translators use the word 'hell' adds to the possible confusion.
- Sheol was used to describe the destiny of both the wicked and the righteous.
- It is also clear that there was a hope that "Sheol" was not the final destiny of the righteous. **Psalm 49:13-15**

¹³ **This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their sayings. Selah. ¹⁴ Like sheep they are laid in the grave [Sheol]; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave [Sheol], far from their dwelling. ¹⁵ But**

God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave [Sheol], for He shall receive me.

- Old Testament thought was that Sheol was the place where the dead abode.
- The wicked received the punishment they deserved there while the righteous dead awaited resurrection and deliverance from the grave.
- Many different opinions about exactly what that meant were developed.
- Thankfully, Jesus came and explained things for us.

- **Hades**

- The word Hades (Strong's # G86) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Sheol.
- Everywhere you see the word Hades, it has the same meaning as Sheol. **Matthew 16:18**

¹⁸ **And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

- **Hell**

- We see the English word Hell used throughout the Bible.
- Every occurrence (18 times) of the word Hell in the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew word Sheol, which was discussed earlier.
- If you study the places that the translator used the word Hell rather than 'the grave', 'the pit', or 'Sheol' you get the sense that it was used almost exclusively when referring to the wicked who die.
- In the New Testament two Greek words are translated as Hell.
- One time in 2 Peter 2:4 the Greek word Tartarus (Strong's # G5020) is used to describe the fate of 'the angels who sinned'.
- Turn to **Luke 16 [Logos]**
- The other 12 occurrences in the New Testament are a translation of the Greek word 'Gehenna' (Strong's # G1067).
- As we get into the New Testament a distinction is being made between these two concepts: Sheol/Hades and Hell.
- Thankfully, Jesus gave us a teaching in Luke 16 that gives us some clarity.

- **The rich man and Lazarus**

- **Luke 16:19-31**

- This parable by Jesus gives us the clearest teaching in Scripture regarding the nature of the abode of the dead, Sheol/Hades.
- Jesus tells of two men, a rich man who had everything going for him but was far from God, and about a man named Lazarus who begged at the rich man's door.
- Lazarus had nothing but was right with God.
- Both died and went to the abode of the dead.
- The rich man ended up in Hades (Sheol), while Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, a separated part of Hades.
- Jesus tells us that the rich man was 'in torments', which means he was suffering terribly.
- The rich man was conscious of his suffering, and also aware of his surroundings.
- As he looked around for relief, he saw Lazarus being comforted by Abraham.
- The rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to him that he might receive some relief from his suffering.
- Abraham responds. **Luke 16:25-26**

But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

- From this we learn that there is a distinction made at the time of death about which side of the abode of the dead that a person ends up on.
- The wicked dead end up on the side of torment, and the righteous dead go the side of the comfort of Abraham.
- From this we also learn that the time to choose to believe and trust in Jesus cannot be delayed.
- The choice must be made on this side of death.
- Once a person dies, their fate is determined.
- Up to and including the time of Christ when someone died, they went to Sheol/Hades; the wicked to the place of torment and the righteous to the side of the comfort of Abraham.
- Then Jesus died for the sins of the whole world and changed everything.
- Setting the captives free.

- Jesus' death accomplished infinitely more than we can possibly imagine.
- One of the mysteries of His death is where He was and what He was doing after He died.
- The Bible tells us that He went to Hades/Sheol after He died. **1 Peter 3:18-20**

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

- As a man, He went where all men go after death.
- But as God He was not constrained to one side of Hades, nor was He prevented from leaving when He was ready to.
- And leave He did on the third day.
- But when He left, He didn't leave alone. **Ephesians 4:7-10**

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore He says: "*When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.*" ⁹ (Now this, "*He ascended*"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

- After Jesus 'preached to the spirits in prison' He ascended out of Hades and emptied the side of Abraham's comfort and took the righteous dead to heaven to await the resurrection from the dead that all the righteous will experience when Christ comes again.

- **Abode of the dead today**

- So, the natural question then is 'What happens when someone dies now?'
- One of two things will happen at the time of death depending on the reality of a person's faith.
- The world is divided into two parts, the wicked and the righteous.
- The wicked are those who have rejected Jesus as their Savior and the righteous are those who have received Him as their Savior.
- **Abode of the wicked dead today**
- If someone dies today without Christ, they depart and go to Hades, to the place of torment.

- Here they will await in torment for the final judgment, what we know as the White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20 after the Millennium is completed.
- This is not Hell. We'll discuss Hell a little later.
- **Abode of the righteous dead today**
- Someone is considered righteous, not based on their own righteousness, but on the righteousness of Christ.
- Upon receiving Christ, we are cloaked in the righteousness of Christ and are destined to be with Him forever.
- When a Christian dies today, they go to be with the Lord Jesus.
- Jesus said to the thief on the cross beside Him: **Luke 23:43**
⁴³ **And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."**
- Based on 2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7 we know that Paradise is heaven.
- When a believer dies, since the cross they go directly to be with Jesus.
- Paul said something like that: **2 Corinthians 5:6-8**
⁶ **So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. ⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.**
- When a believer dies today, they immediately go to be with the Lord.
- And in His presence, we wait for the resurrection of the body at the time of the Rapture. **1 Corinthians 15:50-53**
⁵⁰ **Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.**
- While the Bible doesn't state specifically what believers will be doing while they wait, they will be in the presence of the Lord so we know it will be amazing. **Psalms 16:11**
¹¹ **In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**
- Some have asked me what about babies or the mentally ill.
- God is perfectly good.
- Babies are innocent – I believe they go straight to be with Jesus.

- King David lost a very young son because of David's sin with Bathsheba. **2 Samuel 12:22-23**

²² And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' ²³ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

- David believed he would see his son again.
- Anyone who has never had a chance to choose to accept or reject Jesus is probably going to heaven.

- **Hell**

- Earlier I said that Hades is not Hell.
- Hades is the dwelling place of the wicked dead, but they will not dwell there forever.

- At the White Throne Judgment Hades will be emptied of its occupants. **Revelation 20:13**

¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

- After the wicked dead are judged they are not sent back to Hades.
- In fact, the very next verse in Revelation tells us that Hades is dispatched. **Revelation 20:14**

¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

- After that follows the fate of those who rejected the grace of God and rebelled against His rule in their lives. **Revelation 20:15**

¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

- The 'lake of fire' is Hell.
- When we think or talk about hell, this is where we are talking about.
- Sheol or Hades are temporary dwelling places of the wicked.
- The lake of fire or hell is the place of eternal punishment of the wicked.
- In Revelation 20:14 we are told that being cast into the lake of fire is the second death.
- We have a saying in the church, "Live once, die twice. Live twice, die once."
- By that we mean, as humans we are all destined to live at least once and to die at least once.

- If we receive Jesus Christ, John 3 tells us that we will be born again, made spiritually alive (Ephesians 2), though we will all eventually die physically, we will not face the Second Death (Revelation 20:14).
- If someone does not receive Christ as their Savior, they remain spiritually dead.
- If they die in that state, they go to Hades to await the final judgment and then are cast into the lake of fire, the Second Death.
- That doesn't mean that they are destroyed or as some say annihilated.
- They will live forever in the lake of fire in their spiritually dead state suffering for their rejection of God's amazing grace.
- What is Hell?
- Wayne Grudem in his "Bible Doctrine" says this,
"Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked."
- God in His infinite grace has always made a way for people to be in a right relationship with Him.
- And throughout time people have rejected His grace.
- To reject God and His grace is to be wicked.
- Those who rebel to the end of their life, die in their sins and are labeled by God, the Righteous Judge, as wicked forever.
- Because they have rejected God and His grace there is no place for them in His kingdom.
- Hell was originally created by God to punish Satan and his fallen angels (Matthew 25:41).
- But after the fall of man, it also became the destiny of all who would rebel against God's grace, especially the grace of the sacrifice of God's only Son, Jesus.
- Jesus said more about Hell than anyone in the New Testament.
- In Matthew 25:41, He referred to it a place of 'eternal punishment' in contrast to the fate of those who put their trust in Him He says in verse 46 of the same chapter have 'eternal life'.
- The choice is simple, eternal life with Jesus or eternal punishment in Hell.
- Some of the descriptions of Hell ought to put a sense of fear into the heart and mind of anyone who is resisting the call of God on their life.

- In Mark 9:43 Jesus refers to Hell as ‘unquenchable fire’ and in verse 48 says it is a place ‘where their worm dies not die, and the fire is not quenched’.

- In Matthew 25: 30 Hell is characterized as being ‘outer darkness’.

- Jesus also said in **Matthew 13:41-43**

⁴¹ **The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**

⁴³ **Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!**

- ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’
- Hell is a terrible place.
- If you are a Christian, praise God that you will never have to go there.
- If you are not a Christian, or are not sure, repent of your sins, and confess your need for Jesus to save you.
- Put your trust in Him and ask Him to save you from this horrible fate.

• **Conclusion**

- In summary, Sheol and Hades are referring to the same place, the temporary abode of the dead.
- Until Christ died on the cross both the wicked and the righteous went there, where they were separated.
- The wicked went to the place of torment, and the righteous went to Abraham’s bosom, or place of comfort.
- After Jesus died He emptied the place of comfort and took all the righteous dead to heaven where they await the resurrection of the body.
- The wicked dead still go to Hades, the place of torment, to await the final judgment.
- Those who die in Christ now go directly to heaven to be with the Lord.
- At the Final Judgment after the Millennium, all wicked dead from all time will be judged and sent to the ‘lake of fire, or Hell to be tormented for their sins forever.
- As Christ-followers, we are promised eternal life in the glory of God’s perfect presence where there is fullness of joy.
- We have no fear of hell because we are never going to see it.

- We should be afraid for everyone we know who does not know Christ.
- We should be horrified by the idea of Hell and terrified that anyone we love might end up there.
- I am motivated to serve and obey God out of a deep sense of gratitude for all He has done for me.
- I am also motivated by my love for others, not wanting them to experience Hell forever.
- In fact, our love for God should move us to love others so that don't go there.
- If you have any specific questions on the topics above, please do not hesitate put them in the chat or send me an email at rick@radicalword.com.
- On addition to having the keys to Hades Jesus has the keys of Death.
- Jesus controls our eternal destiny and holds our death in His hand.
- We have no reason to be afraid of death.
- The One who gave His life to save us, is not going to let anything happen to us that isn't a part of His great plan.
- The One who gave us life is not going to let anyone take without His permission.
- Jesus is in control of our lives and deaths, and has ultimate authority concerning where our soul spends all of eternity.
- John is told to write a second time.
- **Revelation 1:19**
- This gives us kind of an outline for the book of Revelation.
- 'the things which you have seen' = past tense.
- Chapter one – John saw the Glorified Christ.
- 'the things which are' = chapters 2 & 3 – the seven churches.
- Real churches during the time that John wrote this letter.
- Also points to what we refer to as the 'Church Age' = the time between Christ's First and Second Comings.
- 'the things which will take place after this'.
- 'after this' = meta tauta – first of ten times in Revelation.
- The use of this term repeatedly points to a chronological order to Revelation.
- Next time 'meta tauta' is used is Revelation 4:1 – first words.

- ‘After this’ refers to after what is contained in chapters 1 to 3.
- This tells us that the current ‘Church Age’ will come to an end.
- And we believe that it will end when Jesus comes prior to pouring out the wrath of God on the world.
- Before judgment comes, God will send Jesus to claim His bride, the church out of the world in an event that we call the Rapture.
- We’ll look at that in detail once we get to chapter 4.
- Chapters 4 to 22 all deal with the future.
- Jesus then closes this chapter with an explanation of some of the symbols.
- **Revelation 1:20**
- ‘mystery’ = a truth previously hidden – not discoverable apart from God revealing it.
- ‘seven stars’ = angels of the churches.
- The angel/messengers are in His right hand, which is a symbol of acceptance and authority.
- We can take a literal interpretation of this and say that each church has an angel that oversees it.
- The word that we translate as angel literally means ‘messenger’.
- It is used that way frequently. **Luke 7:24**
When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”
- ‘messengers’ = same word that is translated ‘angel’ here in verse 20.
- Another interpretation of this is that this refers to the pastors of the churches.
- One of the roles of a pastor is to carry messages from God to God’s people.
- As Christ-followers, we all have the same Holy Spirit.
- God is speaking all the time to all His people.
- But just because God is speaking doesn’t mean we can always hear Him.
- Sometimes we need someone to relay God’s messages to us in a way we can receive them.
- Every Christ-follower should be willing to let God speak to them through one of His messengers.

- Who knows, God might even send an angel to talk to you, though you might not know it is an angel. **Hebrews 13:2**

² **Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.**

- Angels can
- Just something to think about, angels can disguise themselves in such a way that you would not know they were angels.
- It is possible that you have interacted with angels and been completely unaware of it.
- That means we ought to treat every stranger we encounter as a potential angel to be shown hospitality.
- ‘seven lampstands’ = churches.
- Starting in verse seventeen through the end of the chapter, the verses are in red – this is Jesus.
- Jesus is in the midst of the lampstands – He is close to the churches.
- And in chapters 2 and 3 we will see that He cares enough about each of them to examine them and tell them what they need to change to be right with Him.
- We began this text with John responding to the vision of the fully glorified Jesus by falling at His feet ‘as dead’.
- Upon seeing Jesus in His glorified state, how He is in heaven right this instant, and how He will be forevermore, John’s response is to fall down as though he is dead.
- That is how He was when John saw Him 1,900 years ago, that’s how He is today, and that is how He will be for the rest of time.
- John responds in total humility.
- And the sense of the text is that this was not John’s free will at work, John didn’t choose to respond to Jesus, it was involuntary.
- How many of you are breathing right now? Everyone!
- How many of you were thinking about breathing before I asked the question? No one!
- It is an autonomic process, requires no thought, spontaneous.
- That is what it is going to be like when we see Jesus face to face.
- But today, we don’t respond to Jesus like that – not spontaneous.
- We have to think about how we relate to Jesus.
- Previously, we talked to about being ‘in the Spirit’.

- About being absolutely surrendered to the work of the Holy Spirit in you.
- Said it takes three keys to unlock this in us.
- Know God – Attending to His Word.
- Trust God – Accepting your circumstances.
- Wait on God – Attitude of worship.
- In Christ's presence we won't think about humbling ourselves before Him, we won't have time to think about it, will happen spontaneously.
- But why don't we do it spontaneously today? Easy answer is because we are not in the Spirit.
- Paul tells us that there is a battle going on inside of all believers.

Galatians 5:16-17

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

- All of us have a human, carnal side, called the flesh, which has no desire to humble itself before Christ
- In fact, it resists that aggressively.
- As Christians we have the Holy Spirit inside of us, and He is working in us to bring us to Christ in humility.
- And this becomes a spiritual battle that every believer will be engaged in for the rest of our lives.
- If this battle is not going on inside of you, might mean you don't have the Holy Spirit = not saved.
- This battle should get easier as our faith grows, but it will always be there.
- The problem with Christians today, and not just today, it has always been the case, is that we don't think about humbling ourselves before Christ as we should, as His glory demands.
- And result of that is we lack the power of God in our lives.
- Every day, pray that God would make you humble.
- Try as hard as you want, you won't be able to do it on your own.
- Beg God to make you humble – as humble as Christ.
- It is vital to experience the fullness of God's grace in your life. **James 4:6b**

⁶God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

- Someday we will see the glorified Christ and we will fall down in worship as a reflexive response to His glory.
- One of the things we should be doing while we wait is preparing ourselves for that day.
- Anything we know we will be doing in heaven we should be striving to do in this life.
- If we will bow in humble worship before Christ in heaven, we should be bowing in worship of Him today.
- We ought to be getting ready to meet Jesus.
- Turn to **Ephesians 5 [Logos]**
- Kelly and I were married in December 1981.
- My memory of that event is not very vivid, which is probably a testimony to where I was in my life.
- In 2005, Kelly and I decided that we would celebrate our 25th anniversary by renewing our vows.
- We spent the next year getting ready.
- On the day of the ceremony, they opened the doors (Image: **Wedding**) at the back of the church and there she stood on the arm of my oldest son in the same dress she had worn 25 years earlier – she took my breath away.
- She had spent a whole year getting ready.
- She had never been more beautiful than in that moment – she was glorious.
- I am reminded of that moment every time I read the Apostle Paul's words.
- **Ephesians 5:25-27**
- Jesus, God the Son is betrothed to the church, it is His bride.
- And someday, maybe soon, He is coming back to get His bride.
- Jesus wants His bride, the church to get ready.
- Paul also said that was part of what he saw as his ministry. **2**

Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

- As a pastor in a church, I see that as my role also.
- I also see that in my role as husband to help my wife get ready.
- As a father and grandfather, I want them all to be ready.

- Everyone of God's people has a responsibility before God to prepare the Bride of Christ for His soon coming.
- Now you can turn to **Revelation 2**.
- For the church to get ready, all the people of the church need to get ready, because the church is the people.
- As Jesus addresses seven churches, my prayer is that we will see how we can get ready for Him to come get us.
- Before we jump into the first of the seven letters, we need to remind ourselves about what we have studied already.
- Our general outline for the book of Revelation is described in **Revelation 1:19**.

¹⁹ Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- **The things which you have seen – Chapter 1.**
- John saw the glorified Christ standing in the midst of the seven lampstands/churches, having the seven stars/angels/messengers in His right hand.
- **The things which are – Chapters 2 and 3.**
- Seven letters to seven churches with words of encouragement, rebuke, and promise.
- Chapters two and three describe seven real churches that existed at the time John received the revelation and point to seven periods within the church age – the time between Christ's Ascension and His coming for the church at the Rapture.
- We are living in the church age – probably close to the end of it.
- **The things which will take place after this – chapters 4 to 22.**
- These are the things which will take place after the church age ends – once the church, all true believers in Christ are removed from the earth to heaven.
- Chapters two and three must be studied in the light of chapter one.
- In Chapter one, John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.
- He was an exile on the desolate island of Patmos.
- He was probably somewhere he could be alone and just bask in the glory of God's presence.
- The only sound would probably been the wind, waves, and the sea birds.

- All of that was shattered when John heard a voice that demanded instant attention.
- Turning he looked upon the full glory of God the Son, Jesus, the Christ.
- John's instantaneous, involuntary response was to fall at Jesus' feet 'as dead'.
- Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven.
- He took back to Himself the glory that He had had from before the beginning of time. **John 17:4-5**

⁴I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

- It is the terrifyingly glorious Christ that is getting ready to come for us, the church, His bride.
- He is ready and waiting for the Father to send Him to get His bride.
- But before He comes, He wants them to get ready for Him.
- And so, Jesus sends these seven letters to let each church know what it needs to do to get ready for His coming.
- And in that we should see what we need to do to get ready individually.
- **Revelation 2:1-3**
- A careful study of the letters reveals that they all follow a very clear pattern, with only a few significant distinctions.
- Jesus says to each of the churches "I know your deeds/works" except to Sardis and Laodicea.
- He also says to each church "But I have this against you" except to Smyrna and Philadelphia.
- Also in each of the letters is a description of the glorified Christ that reminds us of chapter 1.
- Ephesus is the first city you would come to from Patmos. [**Map – Seven Churches**]
- To the church in Ephesus Jesus comes as 'He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands'.
- This speaks of His authority and presence in the churches.

- The church in Ephesus was a busy church; it was a sanctified church.
- At one time the Apostle Paul it his home church.
- The epistle to the Ephesians was written to this church.
- Later, Paul's son in the faith was tasked to pastor the church in Ephesus.
- First and Second Timothy are written by Paul to Timothy to encourage in that role.
- From the outside the Ephesian church that had it all going on – it was going and growing.
- Everything in verses two and three are the things everyone could see about this church.
- In verse two, Jesus says He knows three things about them.
- 'I know your works' – Jesus knew about the good works they were doing.
- Jesus knows everything we are doing; nothing escapes His sight.

Hebrews 4:13

¹³ **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must* give account.**

- Jesus says, 'I know...your labor'.
- They were working hard, toiling for the Lord.
- And then, 'I know...your patience' – they were enduring affliction and tribulation.
- He goes on to say He saw how they felt about 'those who are evil'.
- The word 'bear' in that verse means to endure.
- They were patient with affliction, but they didn't put up with evil in the church.
- We should speak out against evil in the world, especially on things that we know God cares about, like the lives of unborn children being ended in abortion.
- And if we are given the opportunity we should seek to change the culture and the laws that allow it.
- But we may have to tolerate it in the world until Jesus gets back.
- In the church no evil should be tolerated.
- Any church that condones the things God forbids is not in alignment with God or His Word.

- For example, having a pride flag in a church is an affront to the very heart of God.
- The Ephesians church was also known for not allowing just anyone to speak to the congregation.
- ‘...you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars...’
- Just because someone tells you they are speaking on behalf of God doesn’t mean you should trust them and believe them.
- They should be tested; compare what they are saying with what the Word of God says.
- The apostle Paul commended the Jews in Berea for doing that. **Acts 17:10-11**

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

- From the earliest days of the church there have been false teachers, motivated by personal gain, bringing wrong doctrine into the church.
- It is the responsibility of the leaders of the church to test anyone claiming to speak on behalf of God and reject those who are not speaking the truth.
- One of the ways we do that is in worship music.
- There are very gifted worship leaders writing amazing songs.
- The problem is they are associated with churches who do not teach the truth.
- We are convinced by the Lord that playing those songs would be saying we agree with what those churches are doing.
- We can’t, in faith, do that.
- Besides, there are thousands of good worship songs – we don’t need to compromise.
- We don’t believe that is being legalistic, we are trying to be pure in our worship.
- The next thing Jesus says He knows about them is they ‘have persevered and have patience’.

- It wasn't always easy to work hard for Jesus but they kept at it, no matter how much resistance they got from the culture or the government or other religious groups.
- And the last thing Jesus acknowledges about this church is, 'have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.'
- They worked hard to serve God, and they did it in the name of Christ.
- The word 'weary' includes the meaning to be tired.
- But in this context the meaning is about weary in the soul.
- Someone who is serving God in the Spirit may get physically tired, but they should never be tired in the soul.
- The soul is the part of us that connects to and relates directly with God.
- Someone who is weary in the soul is serving God through their own efforts and power.
- That is how people end up with what is known as 'ministry burnout'.
- Serving God in the Spirit provides an endless source of energy to do the work God assigns to us.
- If we are working hard, we will get tired, and we should make time to get the rest we need so we can get back to the work.
- If someone ever feels like they want to leave the ministry, to stop serving God, that means they were trying to serve God in the flesh, and that always leads to burnout.
- Those are the things Jesus noticed about the church in Ephesus.
- If we remind ourselves that the church is made up of God's people, then these are the kinds of things Jesus is looking for in us, as individual Christ-followers.
- Let's read verses two and three again and ask ourselves if Jesus would tell us He sees these things in our life and ministry.
- **Revelation 2:2-3**
- If you can't say yes, ask the Holy Spirit to show you which ones you ought to be working on and then let Him help you do it.
- These things in verses two and three are the things everyone could see going on in this church.
- On the outside, they were a good church.
- Good works were happening.

- People were probably getting saved.
- But there was something wrong that only Jesus could see – it was a **Church of Ephesus – The Preoccupied Church.**
- **Revelation 2:4**
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- **Closing Comments**
- For those of you watching the live stream, thank you for your participation.
- If anyone has any questions, please connect with me.
- You can email me at rick@radicalword.com.
- You can also connect with me on social media.
- Let's close with a word of prayer.
- God bless you all. Until next time, go be radical with Jesus.