

## Revelation 2

1. We'll now begin the section that has the letters to the churches. Before we dive in though we should note some of the similarities between them. Check out the double sided handout taken from GK Beale's commentary on Romans. Note that the letters to the churches follow a formula. This is an important convention because emphasis can be created by deviated from the standard.
  - a. "These things" is referring back to the Old Testament convention of "these things says the LORD Almighty" which occurs 21 times in the Minor Prophets, 12 in Zechariah alone.
2. Notice also the structure of the pattern of that convention. What does this say about the church? What does it mean that all churches have problems and are in danger? What does that drive us to? What does that drive us away from?
3. Ephesus
  - a. Was the major gateway city to the region. It had a major sea port and the capital of the region. It was wealthy, prosperous and powerful and boasted a population of a quarter of a million people. Ephesus was called "the metropolis of Asia".
  - b. It hosted the Temple of Artemis and its worshipers/business that figures so prominently in the account of the book of Acts. The temple was the largest marble structure in the world and had thousands of priests and priestesses, many of whom were temple prostitutes. Artemis was a fertility goddess with her chest literally covered with breasts. A temple to the emperor Domitian was built there during his rule as well.
  - c. There seems to have been a large Jewish segment of the population that could have achieved a level of acceptance and status, even perhaps as citizens of the city.
  - d. The church, probably by virtue of the city was prominent among the churches, boasting a connection both to Paul and to the Apostle John.
  - e. The city was likely cosmopolitan with elements of many different nationalities and cultures all in one place. It was the kind of place that the church in the Roman empire would begin to take off. Gentile Christianity was very much initially an urban phenomenon.
4. "To the angel". Chapter 1 ended with "the seven stars (held in the hand of the Son of Man) are the seven angels of the seven churches."
  - a. This is a rather mysterious thing the meaning of which there is no consensus. A couple of things seem clear
    - i. They are unlikely to represent human persons. In the book angels are heavenly beings, not people.
    - ii. They have dominion and authority. This is part of the image connecting them with "the stars" that culturally were assumed to hold power over the events in the world. That is why it was important that the Son of Man is seen to have even them within his power.
    - iii. They are also representatives of the churches. Each of the churches are addressed as churches and it is clear that their behavior, obedience or rebellion is significant and has real consequence. So the "angels" are somehow stand-ins but the people are

addressed in a sense through them.

- iv. There is some OT tradition of “guardian angels” or representative angels. We see that also in Acts when Peter shows up and people think it is “his angel”. To what degree this is a way of talking or the thought that went on behind it we can’t be sure, but again we get it enough to move along.
5. The Son of Man is re-represented to each of the churches both connected to the revelation in chapter 1 as well as in a way that addresses something specific and special to the church that is being addressed. What do you think the selection of these elements? What do they communicate?
6. First the positive:
- a. I have seen
    - i. Your work
    - ii. And troubles/toil
    - iii. And your patient endurance (see 1:9)
    - iv. And that you are not able to bear evildoers
    - v. And you have tested (Jesus’ temptations, OT desert testings) those who call themselves “apostles” but are not and you have found them (to be) false
    - vi. And you hold enduringly
    - vii. And bore up for my name’s sake
    - viii. And have not become weary
  - b. If you look at the words here the connotation is exhaustion. The words are all about patient endurance, bearing up, etc. They have not “borne up under” the teaching of false apostles but have borne up “for my name’s sake”. The imagery is all about carrying or bearing. They were not able to bear the false teaching or the false apostles, but they could bear up for the sake of the name.
    - i. The cross is born (Lk 14:27)
    - ii. We bear each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2)
    - iii. Paul must “bear my name” before the nations (Acts 9:15)
    - iv. Paul with regard to the law claims that the requirements of the law were something that their ancestors were unable to bear (Acts 15:10)
    - v. Those who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak (Rom 15:1)
    - vi. In Jesus’ great last supper discourse in John Jesus has many things to say that they cannot bear at that moment (Jn 16:12)
    - vii. Paul bears the marks (stigmata) of Jesus on his body (Gal 6:17)

7. Now the negative: