

# John's Messages to the Seven Churches of Revelation

In the Book of Revelation, John forewarns of the looming destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. And he punctuates this warning with the following emphatic exhortation to the genuine people of God, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues" (Rev 18:4). But we are mistaken if we assume this exhortation was directed only to Christian residents in Jerusalem itself, upon which city this imminent physical destruction would soon descend. After all, John does not even overtly address his apocalyptic warning to those actually resident in Jerusalem, but chose rather seven churches in Asia Minor. And so we must ask why he would do this.

The answer lies in understanding the powerfully hostile and corrupting influence of Judaism upon the first century Church. Judaism, headquartered at Jerusalem, had become the enemy of God, and the enemy of God's people. They not only killed their own husband by crucifying Jesus, they had then declared open war on Christians and Christianity. The history of this first century Church, as recorded in the book of Acts, is replete with repeated and vicious acts of hostility to the emerging Christian movement. And when the Jewish establishment lacked enough manpower to assault the Church directly, they created civil unrest, soliciting help from the surrounding Gentile community.

But their assault on the Christian Church was not always limited to frontal, outward attacks. Their next weapon was far more subtle and deceptive: infiltration of the movement with an eye to corrupting it from within, and co-opting it into subordination to Judaism. Paul identifies this tactic and addresses it head-on in his letter to the Galatians, where he laments that their corruption resulted in "No gospel at all!" (Gal 1:7).

This kind of Jewish corruption had seriously impacted every Christian church in the Mediterranean world. And so when John exhorts the people of God to "Come out of her, my people," this was a warning to unequivocally separate themselves from the corrupting doctrines of Judaism which had afflicted all Christian churches in this era.

So as John writes to these seven churches, he affirms the good work of the Spirit in their midst, but warning that this corrupting influence is also at work. In John's messages, therefore, we find a somewhat mixed message. John describes attributes which identify and align each church with the bride of Christ, but also attributes of the Whore of Babylon (Jerusalem), which was destined to soon destruction. The following charts illustrate John's mixed messages to these churches, with both sets of attributes highlighted, Bride v. Whore.

## The Seven Churches and the *Bride*

Strikingly, all of these promises to the seven churches are fulfilled in the New Jerusalem!

	<u>Promise to the Overcomers</u>	<u>Eschatological Fulfillment</u>
<b>Ephesus</b>	<u>2:7</u> "I will give to him to eat of the <b>tree of life</b> "	<u>22:2</u> "in the midst of its (New Jerusalem's) street – the <b>tree of life</b> "
<b>Smyrna</b>	<u>2:11</u> "he shall not be hurt by <b>the second death</b> "	<u>20:6</u> "on these <b>the second death</b> has no power"
<b>Pergamos</b>	<u>2:17</u> "I will give to him a <i>stone</i> , and on the stone a new <b>name written</b> "	<u>21:14,19</u> "the city has twelve foundations, and <i>on them</i> the <b>names</b> of the twelve apostles...the foundation was of every precious <i>stone</i> "
<b>Thyatira</b>	<u>2:26-28</u> "I will <i>give authority over the nations</i> , and he <b>will shepherd them with a rod of iron</b> ...I will give <b>the morning star</b> "	<u>19:15, 22:16</u> "He... <i>strikes the nations</i> ...He Himself <b>will shepherd them with a rod of iron</b> ...I am <b>the bright morning star</b> "
<b>Sardis</b>	<u>3:5</u> "he will be <i>clothed</i> in <b>white</b> ...his name in the <b>Book of Life</b> "	<u>19:14; 20:12</u> "the armies in heaven... <i>dressed in fine white linen</i> ...and another book was opened, the <b>Book of Life</b> "
<b>Philadelphia</b>	<u>3:8,12</u> "I have set before you an <i>open door</i> that no one can <b>shut</b> ...I will make him a pillar in the <b>temple</b> of <i>My God</i> ...and the name...of My <b>city of the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from God</b> shall be on him"	<u>21:2, 22,25</u> "the holy <b>city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God</b> ...the <i>Lord God Almighty</i> is its <b>temple</b> , and the Lamb...and its <i>gates</i> shall not be <b>shut</b> "
<b>Laodicea</b>	<u>3:21</u> "I will give him to sit with Me on <i>My throne</i> , and...on <b>His throne</b> "	<u>22:3</u> "and the <b>throne of God and the Lamb</b> shall be in it (New Jerusalem)"

## The Seven Churches and the *Whore*

### The Lord's Message

### Eschatological Fulfillment

<b>Ephesus</b>	<u>2:5</u> "Repent...but if not...I will <i>remove your lampstand</i> "	<u>18:23</u> "And the light of a lamp shall not shine in you (Babylon)"
<b>Smyrna</b>	<u>2:10-11</u> "the <b>devil</b> is about to throw some of you in <b>prison</b> ... you will have tribulation <i>ten days</i> ...be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown...you shall not be hurt by <b>the second death</b> "	<u>20:2-7</u> "He laid hold of the <b>devil</b> and bound him for a <i>thousand years</i> ...those who had been <i>beheaded</i> ...lived and reigned with Christ...over such <b>the second death</b> has no power...Satan will be released from his <b>prison</b> "
<u>Pergamos</u>	<u>2:13-14</u> "Antipas, My faithful <b>martyr</b> , who was <i>killed</i> among you...you have there some holding the teaching of <i>Balaam</i> so that they would...eat food sacrificed to idols"	<u>17:6, 19:20</u> "the woman (Babylon) was drunk with the blood... of the <b>martyrs</b> ...the false prophet who had performed signs of deceit...to make them worship the beast"
<b>Thyatira</b>	<u>2:20,22-23</u> "you permit that <b>woman</b> Jezebel...to deceive My servants into committing <b>fornication</b> and to eat things sacrificed to idols (abominations)...I am throwing into a bed those who commit adultery with her...I will give to each one according to your works"	<u>17:4, 18:6,9</u> "The <b>woman</b> (Babylon)...had a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her <b>fornication</b> ...repay her according to her works...those committing fornication with her"
<b>Sardis</b>	<u>3:3</u> "Repent...(or) you will not know in what <b>hour</b> I will come upon you"	<u>18:10</u> "Woe to you, the great city (Babylon)...for in one <b>hour</b> has your judgment come"
<b>Philadelphia</b>	<u>3:9</u> "I will make them come (false Jews of <b>Satan's</b> synagogue) and know that I have loved you"	<u>20:9</u> "They ( <b>Satan</b> and those he deceives) went up...and surrounded the <b>beloved</b> city...and fire came down from heaven and God and devoured them"
<b>Laodicea</b>	<u>3:17-18</u> "you say, 'I am rich... and have need of nothing' ...you do not know that you are... <b>naked</b> ...Buy from Me refined <b>gold</b> ...and white garments"	<u>17:4,16, 18:7</u> "the woman (Babylon) was arrayed in scarlet and adorned with <b>gold</b> ...(yet) these will ...make her <b>naked</b> ...in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen...I will not see sorrow'"

# John's Great Vision of the Seven Last Angels

## Revelation 17:1-22:6

### "Angel" 4

19:11, 16 "Now I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called **Faithful and True**, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...and on *His thigh* He has a name written, **King of Kings** and Lord of Lords"

### Angel 3 ← Two angels in heaven → Angel 5

18:21 "And **one mighty angel** took up a stone like a **great millstone** and threw it *into the sea*, saying, "Thus with violence shall *Babylon the great city* be **hurled down...**"

19:17-18, 20 "And I saw **one angel** standing in the sun" who speaks in a "**great**" voice of judgment upon "**mighty**" men. "And *the beast and the false prophet* were **hurled down into the lake of fire.**"

### Angel 2 ← Two angels in mid-heaven → Angel 6

18:1-3 "After these things I saw another **angel descending from heaven, having great authority**" Fallen Babylon is made a "*dwelling place for demons and a prison for every unclean spirit...because all the nations have drunk the wine of her wrath.*"

20:1-3 "And I saw an **angel descending from heaven having the key of the abyss and a great chain...the devil...(is) bound...and thrown into the abyss, and locked in...so that he should not deceive the nations.**"

### Angel 1 ← Two angels on earth → Angel 7

17:1-3, 8 **Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls spoke with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot...and he led me away in the Spirit into the wilderness..."** The angel speaks of the beast "**ascending.**"

21:9-10 **Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues spoke with me, saying, "Come and I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he led me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain..."** The angel shows the holy city "**descending.**"

The last grand vision of Revelation, extending from 17:1-22:6, unfolds the same vision that Jacob saw in his dream at Bethel (Genesis 28), and that Nathanael, along with all the disciples, was promised in John 1:51. It is now climactically filled by John in his final Patmos vision in Revelation. It paints a picture of the climactic battle of Jesus the Bridegroom King with **angels ascending and descending** on His authority and carrying forth His purposes, resulting in the fall of Babylon the harlot and the triumphant unveiling of the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb.