

Lent, Day 3  
Friday, March 8, 2019

### Revelation 2:1–7

In the last section, John gives us some keys to understand his vision of Jesus, the seven stars are the seven angels or messengers of the churches and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches themselves. Seven is a biblical number for fullness or completeness which means that these seven represent the one church. Therefore, these seven letters for the seven churches are, in fact, one letter for the church. This also means that the praises and warnings are also for the church—then and now.

However, the first word given to the churches is comfort. Remember that this book is being written to churches who are asking questions about whether or not Jesus is, in fact, Lord. Under persecution they are losing hope and sight of Jesus. So the first picture is Jesus holding the angels of the seven churches. This is like a corporate personality or ethos. Really, Jesus has them in his right hand. Right hand is about power and security. Jesus is also walking among them. He is holding them with his powerful hand and he is right in the midst of them.

The church in North America is in great distress today as the culture changes so rapidly at every level. You don't have to listen long to hear the sentiment that the world is going to hell in a hand basket. Unfortunately, for some, this can't happen fast enough. Some Christians will confidently claim that we are in the last days (we are and have been for over 2,000 years) and look for God to take them away to paradise and destroy the rest. The first word to us is a reminder that despite appearances to the contrary, Christ has us in his powerful grip and he is right in the midst of us.

There are also praises given, there are things that we do well. But, then, there is a criticism. You have forgotten your first love. This could be about Jesus and we always must be careful to make sure the fires of love are always burning for our bridegroom. However, the message is a call for them to action. Love is action. They have stopped extending hospitality and care. Particularly, they have ceased to care for the sick and poor in their midst. This is also a warning to us. We can get so caught up with church that we neglect to show love.

This is a very appropriate reminder for Christians in the season of lent. Lent is a time for alms giving or charity. This is part of the giving up of all things which we have been called to. It also ties in with the repeated refrain to overcome or conquer in these seven letters. We overcome/conquer by following Jesus. Following his suffering for the sake of the redemption of the world. Those who love/suffer for the sake of the world, not condemn it, will have the right to eat the fruit of the tree of life in the garden of God.

### Prayer

To the one who holds us securely in his hand, thank you for standing with us. Help us to hear both your praise and your prescription. Give us the courage to love the world rather than condemn it. Give us the strength to follow you by suffering for the sake of the world rather than abandoning it. By this prepare us for your great rescue. Amen.