



A MESSAGE TO THE
SEVEN CHURCHES
OF REVELATION

NO PRESSURE, NO DIAMONDS
REVELATION 2:8-11

Though John saw many strange monsters in his Revelation vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.

-GK Chesterton

... among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Revelation 1:12-16

Pablo Picasso's Guernica



Revelation a *hybrid document*

-*Apocalypse*

-*Prophecy*

-*Pastoral Letter*

John (and thereby his readers with him) is taken up into heaven in order to see the world from the heavenly perspective. He is given a glimpse behind the scenes of history so that he can see what is really going on in the events of his time and place. He is also transported in vision into the final future of the world, so that he can see the present from the perspective of what its final outcome must be, in God's ultimate purpose for human history. [...]

The effect of John's visions, one might say, is to expand his readers' world, both spatially (into heaven) and temporally (into the eschatological future), or, to put it another way, to open their world to divine transcendence...

It is not that the here-and-now are left behind in an escape into heaven or the eschatological future, but that the here-and-now look quite different when they are opened to transcendence.

Richard Bauckham, The Theology of the Book of Revelation

[Revelation] seeks to do two things: first it seeks to *set the present in light of the unseen realities of the future*. For if we know what the future holds it determines the choices we make the in the present. Second, and more importantly, ***it seeks to set the present in light of the invisible realities of the present.***

Darrell Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*

To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:
These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Revelation 1:8-11

“The last great taboo of the West is
self-disobedience.”

@SayersMark

The meaning of life in our Western society is individual freedom. There is no higher good than the right and freedom to decide for yourself what you think is good. Cultural institutions are supposed to be neutral and “value free” – not telling people what to live for, but only ensuring the freedom of every person to live as he or she finds most satisfying and fulfilling. But if the meaning of life is individual freedom and happiness, then suffering is of no possible “use.”

[...]

In this worldview, the only thing to do with suffering is to avoid it at all costs, or, if it is unavoidable, manage and minimize the emotions of pain and discomfort as much as possible.

Timothy Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*

The early martyrs believed that if Jesus is Lord and the only Savior, then he accepts no rivals—no person or religion or ideology or empire. They affirmed that the Christian faith requires nothing less than a firm and joyful commitment to this conviction. Jesus came as God in human flesh to show the way to God and to be the way to God for us. This is the only Jesus there is. A lesser Jesus is not the real Jesus at all, at least not according to the testimony of the martyrs.

Gerald Sittser, *Water from a Deep Well*

"Swear by Caesar's fortune," the proconsul shouted.

"If you imagine that I will swear by Caesar's fortune, as you put it, pretending not to know who I am, I will tell you plainly, I am a Christian."

The proconsul threatened. "I have wild beasts. I shall throw you to them, if you don't change your attitude."

"Call them."

"If you make light of the beasts, I'll have you destroyed by fire."

"The fire you threaten burns for a time and is soon extinguished: there is a fire you know nothing about—the fire of the judgment to come and of eternal punishment, the fire reserved for the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Do what you want."

-Eusebius, *History* pp.119-122

We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are –yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 4:15

Do not be afraid of what you are about to
suffer...

Rev. 2:10

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will
give you life as your victor's crown.

Rev. 2:10