

Intro to Seven Churches

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[0 : 00] Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.

He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written, for the time is near.

John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of king on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father, and to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so, amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

[1 : 21] I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me like, heard me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the lampstands, one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest.

The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.

In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, as we heard about this morning, so many others who see these visions, I fell at his feet as though dead.

[2 : 38] But he laid his right hand on me, saying, Fear not. I am the first and the last, the living one. I died, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades.

Write, therefore, the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. Ask for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and in the seven gold lampstands.

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. I have the privilege, as many of you know, to spend this past week at the Shepherds' Conference, which is in celebration of John MacArthur's 50th year of ministry at Grace Community Church, and it was an amazing conference, altogether one I'll never forget, and certainly treasure for the rest of my life.

And another moment of John MacArthur's that I'll forever treasure is the first time I ever got to hear him preach in person. He came to Midwestern, where I went to school, and this was after I had graduated, and maybe a year or two afterwards, but I had heard that he was coming, and so Danny and I went Monday evening, and then he spoke again on Tuesday afternoon during the surface time, but on Monday evening, and this would have been almost 10 years ago maybe, maybe not quite so long, but he was preaching, and I'll never forget a comment he made during his message.

He said that people often ask him, when will America face the judgment of God? And he said, I tell them it is not a matter of when, it is happening right now.

[4 : 21] And I never forget that, because you could hear a pin drop in the sanctuary. I think we are more fully aware of that now, that we are experiencing that judgment. We should have been more fully aware of it then, but we weren't as much so.

And when he said that, it was like the air had been sucked out of the building, because we were all convicted, I think, at that point, of our lack to share the gospel, and to be the types of Christians that God's word called us to be, and our concern for the nation, which we love.

But anyhow, I'll never forget him saying that. Two weeks ago, I was on searching through Facebook, and I have a friend on there who is about college age.

She was the younger sibling of one of my first students in the first church where I was a youth minister. And she's very, very liberal in her views.

She is definitely pro-choice, and is also in favor, because you read people's posts, or you scroll by, and you see them of late-term abortions, even after birth abortions.

[5 : 37] But then, this same person posts this video. And the video, she writes above it, is, here's something to restore your faith in mankind.

And the video was of a man who came across a prairie dog. I'm not making any of this up. And it was, it was apparently, it had been drowning.

It was in a pool of water. And it was, it was lifeless when he was riding his bike and came across it. And, and he pulls it out of the water, and he resuscitates that little varmint back to life.

And the whole time, he's like rubbing its back, and pressing on its stomach, giving a little CPR. and it, from all I could tell, it was a very real video. And it was kind of touching, because, you know, I do care for, uh, creation.

And I do think that, you know, groundhogs are cute, I guess. Um, but, but do you see the problem here? You know, I just thought, how can you post a video like that, and say, here's something to restore your faith in mankind, and yet, we are, and you are, endorsing, the murder of children, even after they are born.

[6 : 57] And I thought, that, that does not make sense, at all. So, I think we can all agree, that there is no doubt, that our nation needs a turnaround, and in fact, our world needs a turnaround.

But I think, um, before that, we'll see that happen, what we will need to see happen first, is a turnaround in the church. The nation's not going to turn around, the world's not going to turn around, until the church of Jesus Christ, turns around, or, a better way to say that, would be to reform, a reformation.

I want to read to you, a quote from that book, it's lengthy, but it's from, obviously, the author, John MacArthur, but I think he does a great job, of saying some things, some hard truths, I like to talk, I like to say, things that are hard to hear, that are convicting to hear, but they are, are truthful.

And so, he says, in the book of Revelation, Jesus wrote seven letters, to the cities in Asia Minor. He didn't write them, to City Hall, he wrote them, to the church. In the closing chapters, of scripture, the Lord did not set his church, on a mission, to redeem the culture.

He didn't advise, his people, to leverage political power, to institute morality, or to protest, the rule of immoral men. In fact, he didn't launch, a social revolution, or devise, a political strategy, of any kind.

[8 : 27] The church today, and particularly, the church in America, needs to understand, that God has not, called his people, out of the world, simply to wage, a culture war, with the world.

We're not meant, to gain temporal ground, like some invading force, working to superficially, turn this country, back to God. We need to shed, the illusion, that our ancestors, morality, once made America, a Christian nation.

That hits hard. There have never been, he says, any Christian nations, just Christians. And he continues, believers need to understand, that what happens, in America politically, and socially, has nothing to do, with the progress, or the power, of the kingdom of God.

Cultural change, can't accelerate, the kingdom's growth, nor can it hinder it. Christ's kingdom, is not of this world. That's not to say, that I'm dismissive, of our democratic process, or ungrateful, to have a voice in it.

It's a great blessing, to have a vote, and to be able, to support, biblical standards, of morality. Many Christians, throughout the history, of the church, have lived through, far worse circumstances, than ours, with no legal means, to do anything about it.

[9 : 42] And he continues on. But the presumption, that a social movement, or political clout, can make a significant, spiritual difference, in the world, is evidence, of a severe, misunderstanding, of sin.

Believers need, to put our energies, into ministry, that can, transform lives, not into laws. The work, of God's kingdom, is not about, overhauling governments, rewriting regulations, or rebuilding society, in some form, of a Christian utopia.

Political, and social justice, efforts, are at best, short term, external solutions, for society's, moral ills, and they do nothing, to address, the personal, internal, dominant matter, of sinful hearts, that hate God, and can be rescued, from eternal death, only to be, only by faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The will of God, is not that we become, so politicized, that we turn our mission field, into our enemy. Christians are right, to repudiate sin, and to declare, without equivocation, that sin, is an offense, to our holy God.

That includes, sins like abortion, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, and any other sins, that are corrupt culture, that corrupt culture, and corrupt culture, I should say, says that we must, accept, but a culture, sold out to sins, such as those, is not going to be, turned around, much less won over, by angry protests, and partisan politics, it's futile, to think the solution, to our culture's, moral bankruptcy, is a legislative remedy, there is no law, that can make, fallen sinners righteous, and he says, one more paragraph here, the world, is the way it is today, because it is the world, and the church, must confront it, with the full truth, it's hypocritical, for Christians, to berate the secular world, for the way, unbelievers behave, when so many churches, are validating it, either by believing, in its ability, to be redeemed, by human power, or by putting on, a worldly circus, of entertainment, and cheap distractions, from the real issues, it's time for the church, to be about, the ministry, of reconciliation, for God's people, to boldly, and faithfully, proclaim his gospel, and for his church, to be salt and light, in this dark, and desperate world, that was the Lord's message, to the churches, in Revelation, he commanded them, to put off worldliness, and corruption, to renew their loves, for him, and to guard the purity, of his gospel, and his church, and he concludes, by saying, it's time for us, to pay attention, to the letters, to those churches, in Revelation, and heed Christ's call, to reform his church, when we think about, the book of Revelation, we often think about, judgment, we think about, dragons, we think about, the horsemen, of the apocalypse, scrolls, and seals, the Antichrist,

[12 : 36] Satan, Christ's return, the lake of fire, and all things, eventually being made new, but before these things, are brought to bear, in this book, of Revelation, Revelation, it opens, with three chapters, that are addressed, to churches, now these were, real, churches, that Christ, addresses, and he dictates, a message, for each of these, seven churches, through John, the apostle, Revelation, 1-11, there again, it says, write what you see, Jesus commanding John, in a book, and send it, to the seven churches, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamum, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea, these are real churches, in real cities, scattered throughout, what we know today, as Turkey, in fact Tom, I think you said, you've been to one of these churches, haven't you, Smyrna, or cities, they are listed, in an order, that follows, an ancient postal route, and each of these churches, was planted, as a result, of the fruit, of the apostle Paul's ministry,

Ephesus, was something like, the hub, for all of these other churches, it was the sending church, if you will, in that region, toward the end, of his life, John ministered, in the church, at Ephesus, so he was well acquainted, with that congregation, and these congregations, whom the Lord, was addressing, he knew, who he was, speaking about, he knew, who these, these messengers, of these churches were, over, but by this time, John was living, in exile, as he mentions, he is the last, surviving apostle, he is an old man, living on a small, barren island, located in the, Aegean Sea, southwest, of Ephesus, Roman authorities, had banished him, there, because of his, faithful preaching, of the gospel, on the night, before Jesus, was arrested, the Lord himself, had warned his disciples, that they would be persecuted, that persecution, would come for them,

John 15, 18 and 20, there our Lord says, if the world hates you, if the world hates you, you know, that it has hated me, before it hated you, if they persecuted me, they, not might, they will, persecute, you too, tradition, says that all, the disciples, suffered martyrdom, besides John, though, he was boiled, in a basin, of boiling, oil, in, during a, persecution, from the Romans, he was miraculously, though, delivered from that, and now, he's in exile, in the, on the prison island, of

Patmos, and, and he would die there, of old age, so yeah, he didn't face, that martyrdom, but let's not act, like he had, some kind of, easy way out, Patmos today, which is, is interesting, they eventually, put a monastery there, and right now, currently, it's a, it's an island retreat, for many very important, people, which is ironic, but, going back, to the apostles, and the types, of deaths, that they, suffered, and many of these, are given to us, handed down, by tradition, Matthew, suffered martyrdom, in Ethiopia, he was killed, by a sword wound, James, the brother of Jesus, not officially, an apostle, but was still, a very important leader, in the church, in Jerusalem, he was thrown, from the southeast, pinnacle of, of the temple, which would have been, over a hundred feet down, when he refused, to deny his faith, in Jesus Christ, but amazingly, when they discovered, that he survived, this fall, his enemies, beat him to death, with a club, James, the son of Alphaeus, was said to have been, martyred in Egypt, though details are lacking, regarding the account, of his death, Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel, was a missionary, in Asia, he witnessed, in present day Turkey, and was martyred, for his preaching, in Armenia, being flayed, to death, by a whip, Andrew was crucified, on an X-shaped cross, in Greece, after seven soldiers, whipped Andrew severely, they tied his body, to the cross, with cords, to prolong his agony, his followers, reported that, when he was, led toward the cross, Andrew saluted it, with these words, he said, I have long, desired, and expected, this happy hour, the cross, has been consecrated, by the body of Christ, hanging on it, he said, he continued to preach, to his tormentors, as they were leading him, to his death, Thomas was stabbed, with a spear, in India, during one of his, missionary trips, to establish churches there, Matthias, the apostle chosen, to replace, Judas Iscariot, the traitor, was stoned, and then beheaded, Simon the zealot, is recorded, in most traditions, to have traveled, to Persia, which is modern Iran, where he was put to death, by either being crucified, or was hacked to death, by a sword, Thaddeus, is also recorded, in most traditions, as traveling to Persia, with Simon the zealot, and being martyred there, Peter was said, to have been crucified, upside down, in Rome, under the persecution, of the emperor there, the apostle Paul, was tortured, and then beheaded, by the evil,

[18:19] Emperor Nero, in Rome, in AD 67, what's important, to understand here, is not, how the apostles died, what is important, to understand here, is the fact, that they were all, willing to die, for their faith, in Jesus Christ, and what that tells us, is that if Jesus, had not been resurrected, his disciples, would have known it, and people, will not die, for something, they know, to be a lie, the fact, that all of the apostles, were willing to die, horrible deaths, refusing to renounce, their faith in Christ, is tremendous evidence, that they had truly, witnessed, the resurrected, Jesus Christ, the church, faced the full, persecution, from the moment, full persecution, of the world, from the moment, of its inception, first it came primarily, from Israel's, religious leaders, remember, and then likewise, it endured hostility, from Rome,

Roman culture, was dominated, by paganism, they worshiped, many gods, like the Greeks had, and they also partook, in the worship, of their own Caesars, of their own emperors, they required, their citizens, to make an annual, tribute, to the temple, and to declare there, that Caesar is Lord, and needless to say, many Christians, didn't do that, and they didn't fit, very well, into this culture, they didn't make sense, to the Romans, and as a result of that, the Romans, accused them, of several different things, I want to read, some of those things, to you, the Romans, accused Christians, of cannibalism, imagine that, they could not, understand, communion, they referred, to these Christians, talking about, partaking of the Lord's body, and so they assumed, that they must be, eating people, behind closed doors, it is even said, that back in this culture, Roman father, once the child was born, that the baby, would be placed, at the feet of the father, and so, if the father, picked up that baby, then it meant, that he accepted it, as his child, but if he got up, and walked away, it meant that he, refused it, as his child, and he would refuse it, for a number of reasons, certainly back in this culture, unfortunately, it happened a lot, to girls, happened a lot, to babies, who were born, with any kind of, physical defect, for whatever reason, it was up to the father, and if the father, chose that he, did not want to, have that child, as his, growing up, as his, he didn't want to, father that child, then he would leave, and so what they would do, is a lot of times, they'd take these babies, to the town square, and they would leave them there, and so what would happen, a lot of times, is you'd have, you'd have men, pick them up, especially if they were girls, and raise them, and sell them, into prostitution, later on in life, you'd have people, pick them up, and sell them into slavery, do all different kinds of things, and so what was happening, in this culture, is that the Christians, were going, and they were taking, these babies, but the people in Rome, didn't

know what they were doing, with these babies, well they were raising, these babies as their own, they were taking care, of the orphans, and they were raising them, as their own sons and daughters, but they didn't understand that, so what they thought, many of them, what they thought, the Christians were doing, is that they were taking, these babies home, and they were cutting them up, and they were baking them, in the bread, and that's what they were, that's when they were talking, about eating the flesh, that that's what they, assumed was happening, which was obviously, not the case at all.

So they were accused of cannibalism. They were accused of disrupting business. And they were guilty as charged in this case. In some places, the growth of the church hurt the income of the pagan religions by curtailing their sales of animal sacrifices and meats and things like that.

Thirdly, they were accused of gross immorality, including incest. Again, not understanding what they were all about. Believers, during that time, as they still do today, we call ourselves brothers and sisters.

[22 : 39] And we profess the fact that we love one another and we're not ashamed to do that. But that was so strange to them back then. So the pagans assumed that this must be a love that was lustful.

And so they were accused of something that obviously was not the case. Another thing was that they were accused of being anti-family. That still happened today. There was an element of truth in this charge.

Once one became a believer, he or she was welcomed into the family of Christ. This new family became the Christian's deepest commitment. The new faith also typically made believers better family members than they had been before.

But when a conflict came up between their natural family and the family of Christ, their loyalty was to their family in Christ. So they were accused of being anti-family.

They were also accused of poverty. Christians were ridiculed by pagans because so many of their number were poor. And so they said their God was not a good God because they were so poor.

[23 : 48] And if they were so poor, that meant that their God was unable to take care of them. The Christians countered that there were advantages to traveling light, right?

Wealth could become a snare. And besides, they were rich in what counted most in life. So this was obviously an accusation that was true that they did not mind. They were also accused of being atheists.

The Roman world had a multitude of gods and statues all around that were representatives of them. And so Christians would not worship those gods.

And so the Romans accused them of atheism. Another accusation was novelty. The Roman world honored tradition and the ancient religions were revered because they were old.

Christianity was accused of being a new thing, a new upstart religion. So traditional Romans feared that converts were merely seduced by the novelty of something new, a new faith.

[24 : 52] And Christians countered that they were heirs of Judaism and ancient faith that the Romans did recognize. Besides that, the Christians claimed they were the most ancient faith of all because they worshipped the God who existed before creation.

They were also accused of having a lack of patriotism. There was no distinction between church and state in the Roman Empire. All civic festivals were religious.

It was expected that all the world participate and thank the gods for the blessings to the empire. Christians would not participate because it would imply they were worshipping gods that they denied.

They would be accused of idolatry. Further, Christians would not join the army because they did not believe in killing at that time. So there was some validity to this charge.

Yet Christians affirm their loyalty to the state and live lives as exemplary citizens. Ninth, they were accused of antisocial behavior.

[25 : 55] This was related to the charge above. Since Christians would not participate in all of these festivals, they were considered to be antisocial. And then finally, they were accused of causing disaster.

Because the Christians would not honor the Roman religions and gods when floods and famines or disasters came, they were often the ones who were accused as being the source, as being the cause for why those things happened.

They were accused, people would say, well, the gods must be punishing us because of those Christians. Many Romans figured because of the Christians' atheism that that was why these things had happened.

In fact, in AD 64, the Roman Emperor Nero, playing on these long-held suspicions to distract his own misdeeds, he accused the Christians of setting fire to the city of Rome.

Have you ever heard of this? Nero was nuts. I mean, he was batty. He was crazy. And so he was really big into the arts and architecture, and he wanted to rebuild a part of Rome that he thought was old and ugly.

[27 : 08] And the Senate wouldn't commission the money for those projects because they didn't really have it, and for a number of other reasons. And yet, he really wanted it to happen.

So what historians say happened was that he hired some thugs to set fire to those areas that he wanted to rebuild.

That would be his reasoning. And so once this was kind of discovered, it was starting to get back to him, that maybe it was Nero who was the source of these things.

Well, then he turned it on the Christians, and he blamed them for it. And as a result of that, many people shifted the blame to the Christians for something that they did not do.

Nero also would take Christians, and he would smear them with pitch or pine resin. He would bind them in papyrus or bundles of wood, and then he would often impale them, and he would slit their throats, and then they would be set on fire to illuminate his gardens at night and entertain his guests.

[28 : 26] That's pretty sick, isn't it? In Revelation 1-9, John tells us that he was sentenced to the island prison of Patmos, he says, on the account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Preaching the gospel was punishable by death during this time, as it is in many places in our world still today. Although he was living in exile, he was essentially given the death penalty, since he would spend the rest of his life doing hard labor in the quarries there with little to eat and living in very difficult living conditions.

And by the time Revelation was given and written, we believe that John was in his 90s. All this to say that at this point in John's life, he well understood Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3-12, that all who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted.

He himself had said so in his first letter, 1 John 3-13. He said, Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. But as John was living out the remainder of his life on Patmos, he may have wondered about how different his circumstances were from what he had originally expected when he first set out to follow Jesus.

If you remember, Israel had hopes that the Messiah who would come would institute an unmatched, unrivaled kingdom on earth.

[30 : 12] And so they eagerly awaited the arrival of the heir to David's throne, who they believed would vanquish the Romans and establish his own empire.

The salvation they hoped for was temporal. It was of this world. It was not eternal. But that's what they were looking to. And at first, Jesus' disciples were no different.

Throughout Christ's ministry, they competed with one another, remember? For supremacy in his kingdom. In fact, it was John and his brother James. They even recruited their mother to petition Jesus on their behalf to sit on his right and on his left in this kingdom that they anticipated.

They constantly misunderstood Jesus' comments about the necessity of his crucifixion and his comments that he would say, my kingdom is not of this world.

Their minds were focused primarily on worldly treasures until Christ's resurrection and ascension.

[31 : 26] And the time that followed, the church exploded into existence. And the Holy Spirit authenticated the apostles' ministry through miraculous gifts. And it must have seemed, I think, that they must have thought that the Lord's return was imminent.

However, it wasn't too long after this explosion, after the church was birthed, that it began to be infiltrated by enemies, false teachers.

And then it began to face all kinds of persecutions which we've already spoken about. On top of all of this, the churches were in serious spiritual decline by this time.

So John, at this moment, imagine it's you. 90 years old, forced into doing hard labor, on an island exiled from all your friends, from all your family, from your church.

And you have witnessed all this. It was never a doubt. There was never a doubt for him that Jesus was the Christ. But I think, and I may be getting into dangerous territory here because I don't want to assume too much, but you can imagine that things probably hadn't gone the way that he had originally thought they would go, especially when he was first called by the Lord to be his disciple. [32 : 58] So imagine that. And then you endure the false teachers.

After the explosion of the church, you see so many lives who are saved, being transformed by the Holy Spirit, the miracles that gave evidence to the apostles' ministry and to their teachings. And then to see it seeming like it was starting to all crumble apart. A little bit confusing here, I would think, if it was me. I'm certainly much more carnal than the apostle John ever was.

And so the churches were in spiritual decline. So certainly you would think that John would have reason to be depressed at this point, to be disappointed by what had become of him, maybe, and certainly by what had come of many of the churches.

No matter how mature a believer he was, it's surely conceivable, I think that even John could have used some hope and solace during this very difficult time.

[34 : 17] And boy, did he ever get some hope and solace during this time. And we'll get into, we'll get into Jesus and the images, the word images that John uses to describe him and what those things mean.

We'll get into that next time. But just imagine that that's you and you're going through all of these things and you hear a voice. Familiar but different, right?

He'd heard it, I think, before because it's Jesus, but it's different. It's got a power to it. Not to say that Jesus didn't have a power to his voice, but you know what I'm saying.

This is the resurrected Jesus Christ. And I think that he was thrilled and terrified as we see. As he turns and he sees the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ.

And verse 17 records his response and what he saw. And as Pastor Dan pointed out this morning, when I saw him, John says, I fell at his feet as though dead.

[35 : 25] And I'm going to piggyback off of some of the statements that Dan made this morning, but this is the response throughout Scripture when someone sees either an angel or sees a vision of God.

As, you know, we also see on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the veil of Jesus' flesh was removed and they saw his deity, Peter, James, and John.

Remember, they fell down at that moment as if dead. And we see it throughout Scripture.

Whenever it happens, they fall on the ground as if dead.

So, this is a little bit of a side note, but all of these afterlife stories that you hear, that maybe you've read, they record different reactions, don't they?

And if their reactions were these people aren't falling on their face as if dead, they didn't really see these things. John's description of Jesus is frightening.

[36 : 38] It's terrifying. It's awesome. Frightening in a way that, again, isn't horrifying, but in a way that is just awesome. And we'll get into that next time.

John saw Jesus glorified. He saw him as both ruler, judge, and executioner. The head of the church was ready to mete out his righteous judgment, not only on the world, but first, on his church.

And we'll see that the core and theme of his message to the seven churches is one word. Repent. Repent.

To the church at Ephesus, he said in Revelation 2.5, therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent and do the deeds you did at first.

He said a similar message to the church at Pergamum. Therefore, repent or else I am coming to you quickly and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

[37 : 50] He warned the church at Thyatira of the severe judgment that awaited unless they repent.

Chapter 2, verse 22. He charged the church at Sardis to remember that you have received and heard and keep it and repent.

Chapter 3, verse 3. And he gave a final warning to the church at Laodicea reminding them in chapter 3, verse 19, those whom I love, who I reprove and discipline, therefore be zealous and repent.

Do you see? That's the theme of his message. It shows up over and over again. Here's the other thing. These were not just passing, casual warnings. It wasn't as if Jesus was saying, hey John, you know, I got some things to tell you but first I want to focus on these seven churches.

There's some things that I'm concerned about and I want to handle those little things first. No, that is not the case at all. This wasn't like a yellow light. You know, you sinners as you're driving and you see that yellow light and you know what you're supposed to do.

Slow down because you think, ah, it's just a warning. I do it. You know, I'm not afraid to confess that when I see the yellow light, I hit the gas pedal. I'm going to try to beat that thing, right?

[39 : 09] And I'm already thinking, and this is okay, Tom, because you're retired so I can confess to you, but I'm thinking, you know, the cops are probably going to let me go and if not, then I'll tell them that I know Tom Holland and you know, one way or another I'll get out of it.

But we see the yellow lights as kind of like a warning that we don't take seriously is what I'm trying to say. But these are warnings that we must pay heed to because there are dangerous, devastating consequences if we don't.

These warnings are written to specific congregations about issues that were particular to them, but they also stand as warnings to the entire church throughout its history and it's very applicable to the church today as we will see.

These warnings and rebukes issued to these churches are just as applicable to our times today. If not, I think, maybe even more so, we need to hear these things.

Much change has occurred in our world between the first and 21st century. However, the same threats that the church of the first century faced are the same threats that the church of the 21st century faces.

[40 : 24] And here's the thing. God has not softened or lowered His standards for His church over those centuries. He continues to demand that His church be pure and so His message to the churches in Revelations are messages that the church must continue to hear and abide by today.

Christ is still calling His churches to repent. and warning them of the consequences if they don't. Thank you.