***The Commission Concluded

RV06-02***

We are continuing in Revelation 1:17-20. We're going to read about the commission to John being concluded. John the apostle has been commanded by a voice of authority to write a book – a book to seven specific churches in the Roman province of Asia. Just before he does this, he turns to look at the voice, and he sees, in a vision, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in a way he has never seen Him before. The vision that he sees concerning Jesus Christ is that of the Lord in judgment. He sees Jesus Christ standing, surrounded by seven individual lamp stands. These lamp stands burned, functioning on olive oil, which represents the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The light which is going forth is the light of the Bible doctrine. A little later, we will discover that these lamp stands represent the individual, independent local churches in the seven churches that he is writing this book to. These churches have the job of illuminating society through the propagation of God's divine viewpoint. They do this on the basis of the functioning of God the Holy Spirit, not on the functioning of the devices of our day which are used as substitutes for the power of the Spirit of God.

He also sees that Jesus Christ is standing with His right palm open. On that palm there lay seven stars. These seven stars, we are told a little later, represent what the Bible calls the "angels," which is a word for "messenger," or the spokesman for each of these seven churches.

The Lord Jesus Christ was seen in a long robe, the robe signifying his role as a priest judge, and signifying authority over these local churches that surround Him. He wears a golden belt at the chest level, which is the place that one wears a belt when he is acting in judgment. Jesus Christ had a head of white hair, signifying His absolute purity as well as His eternity. He had eyes that were blazing as a consuming flame, which is holiness searching out evil. All of this picture is a picture of Christ in judgment. He had feet which were glowing as metal melted in a furnace, associated here with a bronze metal, which in Scripture stands for judgment. He had a voice that spoke with the thunderous power of rushing water – again, the voice of authority and judgment. He had a sword which proceeded from His mouth, which represented words of eternal judgment. Finally, He had a face that had the brilliance of the noonday sun, reflecting the glory of God in His Holiness.

So here you have a picture of God in His glory, but God the Son in the glory of judgment. The vision of Jesus Christ, which is reflected here, is that of His holiness operating in judgment upon society. He is seen here in the role of judge of man's sins and of judge of man's institutions. There are many things in our day that are moving toward the tribulation world. The book of the Revelation takes on increased meaning for us if, periodically, we can call your attention to the signs of our day which are indicative of the fact that our society is being systematically moved toward the tribulation world... It's all a calculated preparation for this terrible, terrible tribulation world that the Bible tells us about in the Book of Revelation.

**John Fell at Jesus' Feet**

John saw this image of Jesus Christ which was an image that was so different than anything he had ever known, and an image purely of Christ in judgment. Everything he saw about the Lord connoted judgment. He tells us in verse 17, "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet, as dead." "When" is the Greek word "hoti," and it means at the point of time when John finally was able to take this in. The words saw is, "horao." He took it in in the word that describes an overall panoramic view. John says when he was able to grasp everything he saw (the lamp stands; and, all these details concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Christ), his eyes focused specifically on the grandeur of the scene as the glory of God reflected there. John says, "When I saw Him," and he is referring to the person which, back in verse 13, was described, "As One like unto the Son of Man." "Him," of course, referred to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When John saw all of this, the Bible says, "He fell." "Fell" is the Greek word "pipto." "Pipto" means to prostrate oneself upon the ground. This is aorist tense. There was a point when suddenly everything in John was caught up in one intense ball of fear, and it caused him to just fall on his face on the ground. This is active voice. John himself did the falling. It's indicative – a statement of fact. He simply dropped to the ground, stunned by the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ as a consuming fire of judgment.

You must remember that this is the same disciple that was a favorite with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the same disciple that very often would rest his head upon the bosom of Jesus. These two were very close, but John had never known Jesus Christ in this kind of judgment capacity. He had known Him only as the Lamb of God. He had known Him only as the Jesus who was extending a hand to try to assist and bring some sense to disoriented, sinful humanity.

John, when he sees Jesus in the form of this judgment, just cannot restrain himself. The Bible simply says that, "He fell at His feet." The word "at" is interesting because it's the word "pros." "Pros," you may remember, means "face-to-face." John literally fell right down there at the feet of Jesus Christ, and he was face-to-face with the feet of the Lord. The word for "feet" is "pous." Jesus Christ is standing there with those feet that look like they have just come out of a furnace, like molten metal glowing. John, beside himself with fear, falls face-to-face before those feet.

It says that he fell, "As dead." The word "as" is "hos." It doesn't mean that John died. It just means that he was in a status (a condition) of being "nekros." "Nekros" means physical life gone. He wasn't really dead. He was just in a status of such fear that he just froze up. He fell before the feet of the Lord Jesus, and there he lay. John is reacting to feelings of fear in the presence of Jesus Christ, not as the Lamb of God, but as the lion of Judah. This time, when the world sees Jesus, it will no longer see Him as that meek and lowly lamb. However, it will see Him in the frightening qualities of the lion of the tribe of Judah.

I don't know entirely how the world is going to see Christ on that day when darkness enshrouds the whole earth, in that moment just before the Second Coming breaks forth, and all the earth looks up and they see, out in outer space, the arrival of Jesus Christ in all of His magnificent glory with all the believers of the church age coming with Him. But it may well be that when they see Him, they're going to see Him about the way that John saw the Lord. He will be coming at that time, again, not as Savior, but He will be coming purely as judge. Therefore, it will be in that lion role.

This is a similar reaction that other people have had throughout the history of humanity, when people have been confronted by the glory of God. We read that this was Abraham's reaction in Genesis 17:3. It was Manoah's reaction in Judges 13:20. It was Ezekiel's reaction in Ezekiel's 3:23, Ezekiel 43:3, and Ezekiel 44:4. It was Daniel's reaction in Daniel 8:17 and Daniel 10:8-17. And certainly, we remember that on the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew 17:6, it was the experience of Peter, James, and John, including this very John. So John had one other occasion when he was confronted with the Lord, but it was different. On the Mount of Transfiguration, it was just Jesus Christ pulling His human covering back which shielded the glory of His deity, and for just a moment letting these disciples see Him as God – shining in the glory of God. And that was frightening enough. And as in the past, when people have been confronted with the glory of God, it has always been a frightening experience. The reason for that is because we're sinners.

You might say, "Well, I don't think I'd do that. If I saw Jesus Christ, I don't think I'd get scared." Yes, you would. You'd get scared out of your wits because we have a sin nature. No matter how much we know about God, and no matter how much we know about these incidents, if suddenly the Lord would appear to you, if for some reason God should bring a message to you by this kind of direct communication, it would be awesome.

John knew Jesus well, but he never knew Him in this kind of a frightening way. The closest he came to that was that experience of the Mount of Transfiguration.

**Jesus Comforts John**

Well, the tender Jesus Christ walks up to his old friend John, and He lays His right hand upon him. The word "lay" is "tithemi." It actually means "to place." Jesus placed His right hand gently upon John, who was lying on the ground at His feet. We see this is active voice, so, Jesus Himself actually walked up and physically touched John. And John actually felt the physical hand of Jesus Christ on his own physical body at some point. We're told that it was the right hand. The Greek doesn't have the word for just "hand." It says "dexios," which is the adjective for "right." However, it is to be understood as right hand.

"And it was put upon me," John says, actually touching him. And then Jesus spoke to John after gently putting His hand upon him. We have the word "saying," which is "lego." This is the word which stresses the content – the meaning of the words. John was very much interested at this point, not just in the fact that Jesus Christ was speaking, but he was very much interested in specifically what the Lord was saying to him.

The thing that He said to him must have brought all kinds of memories back to John, because it is words which he had heard the Lord say on more than one occasion: "Fear not." The word "fear" is the Greek word "phobeo." This means just exactly that. It means to be scared. It's in the present tense, which means that the Lord was saying, "John, just don't be afraid anymore from henceforth. Continually, do not be afraid. It was passive, meaning that John was not to be frightened by the vision he had seen. If John thought he had seen something here that had frightened him, we know that he's in for a whole lot more. As a matter of fact, we know that, later on, as this vision unfolds to him, he cannot restrain himself again from falling into a reaction of fear to what he has seen. However, here it is a fear which has been thrust upon him by seeing Jesus Christ in this judgmental role.

And interestingly enough, "phobeo" is imperative. It is a command of God for John to get control of himself. And it uses the negative "me" meaning "not." This is the usual negative which is used with this imperative mood. It means, "Just don't be afraid."

Now, John, as I say, heard this on more than one occasion from the Lord. We'll just read one which is in Mark 6:50, where Jesus meets the disciples while he was walking on the water. All the disciples were frightened by what they saw: "For they all saw Him and were troubled," which means they were afraid. "And immediately He talked to them and said unto them, 'Be of good cheer. It is I. Be not afraid." And perhaps that expression on more than one occasion, "Be not afraid," in the voice of the Lord Jesus was extremely reassuring undoubtedly on this occasion for John, because it brought to his memory many other times when indeed the Lord said, "Don't be afraid," and John knew that he did not have to be afraid. Therefore, having put His hand on John, He gently speaks to him, and commands him that he is not to be afraid. He is not to fear Him.

Then Jesus goes on to explain why he is not to fear Him. He says, "I am the first and the last." In the Greek this time, the word "I" stands all by itself. It is the Greek word "ego." It's not just part of the verb. It is spelled out specifically in this personal pronoun. The emphasis is being placed by Jesus upon He Himself. He wants to make it clear that He's saying something about Himself. "I am" is the Greek word "eimi." This is the status of Jesus Christ in heaven today. It's present tense, so it means that Jesus is going to say something that is constantly true about Him. It is active. It is His present status. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

**Jesus is the First and the Last**

What is that status? Jesus says, "I, and I alone (emphasizing Himself) am the first," the "protos." This word has to do with time: "I am the first in the order of all events of time. And not only that, but I am the 'eschatos' as well." This also is related to time. So Jesus Christ is saying, "On a timeline, I am first and I am last." This is His way of saying that He is all of human history. He is the start and the finish, and He controls all the events. This, of course, is another way of referring to the deity of Christ, because these words convey to us the fact that He is eternal. They are reminiscent of a statement that is recorded by God in Isaiah 44:6, where we read, "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and His redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, 'I am the first, and I am the last. And beside Me there is no God." When God is trying to make clear to us that there is no other deity in the universe, He uses this expression relative to time. God says, "Before Me, relative to human history and human events, there was nothing, and after Me there would be nothing. I am the beginning of human history, and I'm going to terminate human history. I am the first and the last." It is not only the sovereignty of God, the person of Christ, which is being indicated here, but also His absolute eternity – from eternity past, forever on.

Verse 18 speaks about the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Here is a comforting note in a world of death. John is a 96-year-old man. He is pressing on toward the century mark. He has far outlived his contemporaries. He has far extended beyond the lifespan that people normally had at that time in history. So obviously, he knew that death was something that was near at hand. He was on that island in exile because of the violence of Domitian the emperor, and because of the hatred of Domitian toward the Christians. At any moment, the word could go out from the emperor, "Take John out and execute him."

**Jesus Christ is Alive**

So Jesus Christ points out to John a very comforting point in verse 18 when He says, "I am He that lives." The word "lives" is the Greek word "zao." It means "to be alive." It refers to the function of life in the body, and it is referring here to the body of Jesus Christ which gave up its life on the cross. When He says, "I live," it is in the present tense, which means the continual state of the physical body of Jesus Christ. It will never die again. When he says, "I live," it's active, meaning that it is the resurrected life of Jesus Christ. And it is participle, which gives a principle – a principle which applies to us concerning our bodies. Take comfort, whatever may happen to you.

Whether you die in the peaceful sleep of the middle of the night; whether you die by violence on the highway; or, whether you die as a martyr of Jesus Christ under persecution of some state authority that has gone amok: however it may be, whether it's painful or quick or prolonged or unexpected or expected, be that as it may, the time is going to come when you will be in exactly the same position, and you will be able to say, "I live." In that word, you will say what Jesus was saying to John: "I'm the one who was dead physically, but now I am alive; I'll always be alive; and, I'll never be dead again." This is a clear contrast here to all the heathen gods that filled the Roman Greco world – all the heathen gods who were all characterized by one word: dead. In contrast to all of them, Jesus says, "I am the 'zao' God. I am the God who is alive."

"And not only am I alive," but then he throws in an addition. He says, "And furthermore, I am not only now and forever alive, but I am the One who was dead. The word for "was," you might think, would be our usual word "eimi" – that verb that keeps reoccurring for "I am" and "I was." However, this word is "ginomai," interestingly enough. "Ginomai" means "to become something," not just "to be." We would translate this as "having become dead." This is in His humanity. He never died in His deity. "Having become 'nekros.'" So what we have here is Jesus stating that He is alive now, but He is alive as One who had, at one time in history, become dead. In other words, Jesus Christ had a bonafide physical death. Jesus Christ actually stands before John in the same physical body in which He died on the cross.

Now, of course, immediately you say, "That's supernatural." That's right. And that's why the unbelievers and the liberals strongly oppose the notion that Jesus Christ ever died on the cross and came back to life. If they want to say, "Well, He did come back alive; people did see Him; the evidence is too strong; and, there were people who saw Him after that crucifixion event," then they say, "but that was because He never died in the first place." They say, "Well, He took a terrible beating, but it just caused Him to faint, and what happened on the cross was that He just fainted. He swooned. And when they put Him in the tomb, the tomb was nice and cold and refreshing, and it revived Him. And when He woke up, He opened his eyes and saw that He was in the tomb, and He just got up and took the gray clothes off and threw them down, and he walked out. He never died."

Now, that takes a real stretch of mentality to believe that. However, that is what the unbeliever will do. This is just like the unbelieving evolutionists today who will believe the most absurd things in order to be able to hang on to his misconceptions of his human viewpoint, because if he gives it up, then he must admit that there is something supernatural. Jesus Christ said, "I am the God who is alive, John." You knew Me. The body in which I moved through Palestine with you is the body that I now stand in front of you in. And I am the One who had really died. I had become dead in My humanity." And it is that Jesus who is now alive: "I am He that lived, and had become dead, and, behold." The word "behold" is "idou." When you see that in the Bible, that's an attention-gathering word. That's the word to announce a dramatic statement. That statement is "I am alive." And here we do have our word "eimi" for "I am". This is the constant status which is true of Jesus Christ. It is a statement of fact. The word "alive," you might think, is a noun, but it's a verb. It's the word "zao" again, that we had before. However, here it's in the form of a participle.

Without going into the details, this, in Greek grammar, is called a paraphrastic. It has a participle with a verb, and it makes a statement in a very, very strong way. When the Greek wants to say something very emphatically, this is one of the devices that is used. It will hook two verbs together in this particular fashion. Therefore, here you have the physical life of Jesus Christ described by the word "zao." He is describing this by the word "I am" as a present continuing condition. And it is a strong statement of the permanent status of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had not only become dead, and He was not only alive now, but He was never going to die again.

And then to climax that, he adds one more word. This is another very strong expression in the Greek. You miss it completely in the English. The word "for evermore." "More" is actually the word "for" which in Greek is "eis," which means "unto." And then it uses "evermore" which is the Greek word for "age:" "aion." And what the Greek says is "Unto the ages," and then it adds another "of the ages." This is the Greek way of saying "time without end." We say "eternity." Forever" is a good translation. That's the word we would use. However, the way the Greek puts it, it makes it very, very powerful. What this is saying is that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is permanent. Because it says that about Him, it also says that about us.

The word "amen" is not in there. Some person who was copying this manuscript just got so moved by the tremendous things that he was reading, that he slipped the word "amen" in there. And it's very fitting, but it's not in the original text.

**The Keys of Death and Hades**

Then there is another word of comfort to John (just to close off this 18th verse). Jesus says, "There is something I'll tell you John, that'll be a comfort to your heart." He says, "I have 'echo,'" which means "to hold. It is present tense: "I continually hold." It is active: "I, Jesus Christ Myself, hold this." It is indicative – a statement of fact. I hold what? "I hold the 'kleis.'" This is "the keys" – a symbol of authority. The keys of what? Our King James translation says, "The keys of Hades and death." The Greek Bible turns that around. It says, "The keys of death and Hades," and that should be more properly the way, because first it's death, and then Hades. Therefore, you have the word "thanatos" again, that word that represents the soul and spirit leaving the body so that there is what we call a person being in a condition of dead.

And then the word "Hades," which is the Greek word "hades." Before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "hades" was the place that everybody who died went to. Hades was divided into compartments. One compartment was called "paradise," or the Jews called it Abraham's bosom. The other compartment was called "torments." There was a third compartment called "tartarus." Everybody who was born again before the resurrection of Jesus Christ went into the paradise compartment of Hades. You know the story of Lazarus and the rich man. Everybody who was evil (that it, who was not born again), like the rich man, went into the compartment called torments. And that was just like what we envision of the lake of fire. It was a place of pain and suffering. Tartarus was a third compartment of Hades which was reserved for those demon angels in Genesis 6 who intermarried with women and formed that hybrid race of giants. These are kept under chain in the darkness of Tartarus, awaiting judgment.

When Jesus Christ died, His soul went into Hades. It went into paradise. It stood here in torments, and it made an announcement – a proclamation. This is what we read about in the book of 1 Peter 3:18-22. That passage speaks about Jesus Christ making an announcement to these spirits in prison. Where they were in prison, of course, was here in Hades. The announcement that was made about Satan, who had been the authority with death. It had been Satan who had the club of death that he held over the human race all these centuries. Jesus Christ announced that Satan had been defeated upon the cross; the power of death had been taken from him; and, the hopelessness of these people who were in torment and of these demon angels in Tartarus was now sealed. Whatever hope they had had up to now, that Satan was going to pull something off to release them, was forever gone. Then the Lord Jesus Christ turned around, and He took paradise up to heaven with Him, and transferred that whole group of believers into the presence of God.

The reason this was necessary, we shall find in the book of Romans, was that God had not provided the basis of justification up to this point in time. He was forgiving sins and declaring people righteous, such as He did with Abraham *on credit* – on the basis that someday Jesus Christ was going to come and make the payment. When the payment was made, now God could actually fulfill that which He had given to these people on credit (on promise), and He could take them to heaven, which He did.

Now, the only people that go to Hades are unbelievers. Nobody goes to what we call hell when you die. Nobody goes to what we call the lake of fire. Everybody who dies as an unbeliever goes to Hades, which is only a place of torment now, in this compartment, for these particular evil angels. Jesus Christ said, "I have the keys, first of all, of death." That means, "I have authority over death." That means that nobody dies until Jesus Christ says, "You're dead." No unbeliever dies until Jesus Christ Himself makes that decision. Until He makes that decision, that unbeliever has the grace of God holding the door open for him to make the choice that will give him eternal life in heaven.

You and I as believers are under that same protective care. There's only one person who has the key that is going to unlock the tomb for you. That is Jesus Christ. And until He does, you're immortal. I don't care whether you're on the field of battle. I don't care how much your life may be threatened in any situation. I don't care how many physical burdens and how much of a load you carry, or anything else. I don't care what strain you may be under. Your life is totally secure until Jesus Christ uses the key. For those who are believers, that key is the entrance into opening the door to heaven. For those who are unbelievers, that key, he says, is the door that opens the way into this place called Hades.

What's going to happen in the future? Well, we'll find a little later in the book of the Revelation that when the second death is imposed (that is, the final separation of unbelievers from Jesus Christ), Jesus Christ is going to come, and He's going to take all of Hades and all of Tartarus, and He's going to plunge them into the lake of fire, which has been created for Satan's angels. This is the place that we normally refer to as hell. That's why we say that nobody has yet entered hell – only Hades. Hell is being reserved as a place to which Satan, and the demon angels, and the people who are in Hades, and the evil angels in Tartarus will someday be thrown.

There's no escape from this judgment of the Lord Jesus Christ. This expression, "I have the keys of Hades and of death means that He is absolutely sovereign over death. Jesus Christ says, "Your days are numbered. That's true. Your opportunities are numbered. However, I'm the one who decides the number that they are."

Satan once ruled all of humanity with this fear of death. We read about this in Hebrews 2:14-15. At the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he lost the whole thing. Now, nobody who is a believer has any ground to fear death.

**The Things which you have Seen**

The final verses, 19 and 20, give us an interesting and a Holy Spirit directed outline of the Scriptures. Let's tie it up. John is told here, "Write." This is that command again. This is imperative. He has already been told to write. Now he is given the outline of the book of the Revelation. He says, "Write these things which you have seen." It uses that word "horao" again: which you have seen in an overview panorama. Well, what has he just seen? This image (this vision) of Christ standing in the midst of these seven lamp stands, and Jesus Christ portrayed in these elements of judgment. OK. God the Holy Spirit says, "John, Roman numeral one of your outline of the book is these things which you have seen."

**The Things which Are**

Then he says, "Roman numeral two will be the things which are." Again, we have the word "eimi." This refers to the local church testimony that we will be studying next with the letter to the church at Ephesus. These are the seven letters to these seven churches, which we have in Revelation 2 and 3. So Roman numeral two is the condition of the local church as it existed at that time (in the New Testament time), but as those churches reflected the condition of local churches all through this age of the church. So Roman numeral two of the outline of the book of Revelation is the church age.

**The Things which shall be Hereafter**

"Then Roman numeral three is the last part of verse 19, 'and the things which shall be hereafter,'" or literally, "The things which shall become." We have that word "ginomai" again for "be." The word "shall" is "mello." "Mello" doesn't just mean "shall," but it means "about." Therefore, he says, "And the things which are about to be hereafter." This word "hereafter" is "meta." "Meta" means "after," and it is with the word things. So it's saying, "After these things." After what things? After point two in the outline – after the event of the local churches in the age of grace.

So the third part of this outline is going to actually be the main part of the book of the Revelation. In that third part, you will have this breakdown: Revelation 4 and 5 will describe the condition of the church in heaven after the rapture. Revelation 6 through 19 will give you the situation (the events) of the tribulation era. Revelation 20 will give you the millennium and the Great White Throne judgment. Then, Revelation 21 is the eternal state. Then we have some closing concluding remarks in Revelation 22.

So here is a divinely guided outline. The reason I'm stressing this is because this verse alone answers the problem that some people have as to whether this book refers to something that has historically taken place, or whether it's the future. It clearly says that the main part of this book is concerning the things which will be after these things, referring to the seven letters.

Verse 20 says, "The mystery of the seven stars, which you saw in My hand." The word "mystery" refers to something of a doctrinal nature which has been hidden and not revealed before: "The mystery of these seven stars, which you saw in My right hand and the seven golden lamp stands." The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches. We've already touched upon that. Again, I remind you that the word "angels" here is the Greek word "aggelos." "Aggelos" is the word that is usually used for angels – a spirit being. But "aggelos" is also a word which is used in the bible for "a messenger." There are other times when the word "messenger" is used.

For example, we won't stop to read it, but you can check it for yourself. Matthew 11:10 uses it in this way, as does Luke 7:24. You may compare that with Luke 7:19 which shows us that these were human beings, that, in Luke 7:24, are called "angels." They were human messengers. So what we have here is not a spirit being who is responsible for every church, but an angel being. These angels are here in the masculine tense. These are male representatives. These are male spokesmen. These indeed are the men who are the pastor-teachers of these churches to which John is writing. These people are responsible. That's the point. They're in Jesus Christ's hand. Any church that has the pastor that it should have has it because they've permitted Jesus Christ to give them that pastor. And any pastor who in his right church is there because he permitted Jesus Christ to allow him to be placed in the right place. But once he's there, there's a very grave responsibility on him.

Paul pointed this out in Acts 20:28 where he was with the elders (the pastor-teachers) of the various churches that had gathered with him as he was about to go to Jerusalem. He told them he would never see them again: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Paul said, You're responsible, men. Be careful what you do with the lives of those sheep. They are God's lambs. They've been given to you to be fed on the Word of God. Treat them accordingly." We shall find that a lamp stand (a local church) which does not function on that basis will be snuffed out. We find that any pastor-teacher who does not function upon the proper role for which Jesus Christ placed him in a local church will be snuffed out. Sooner or later, that's what happens.

So here is a very impressive statement all the way down to the end now. Here's the final statement (the final commission) to John for the writing of the book of the Revelation. We've got the outline. We know who's speaking to us. We know the authority of the judging Christ upon which this is given. We are now going to begin to see, first of all, what Jesus Christ had to say to the pastor and to the congregation at Ephesus.

I'll remind you now that as we study what is true of the church as a whole, and that no church is anything but a group of individual human beings. So when there was something commendable about a church, it's because it was commendable of individual people in that condition. When there was something terrible said about the church, it was because there was something terrible about individuals within that church. And when there is a warning, the way to read these letters is to take that warning as being to individual church members like ourselves, not just some organization. That is because a local church organization is always individuals. Some of these warnings, particularly this first one, are going to be pretty staggering. It'll explain to you why some people, who were once effective in the Lord's service, come to the point where they're no longer effective. It will tell you why some people who were in the heart of the angelic conflict (in the angelic warfare) have fallen as casualties within it. The next two chapters of Revelation are going to be a very informative.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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