

Jesus Profile of Asia Minor Association

Revelation 1: 19-20; Revelation 2: 1-2; Revelation 2 - 3

Rev 1:19-2:2a (NASB) ¹⁹"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. ²⁰The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. ¹"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: ²I know your deeds."

I gave this report essentially the same as message nine years ago to Associational Missionaries in Arkansas, and then I called the message – The ACP of the AMA. I figured that the associational missionaries would smile at the alphabet soup language. I thought of this message during this year as appropriate to share with you all.

This report is not intended to be an explanation of the Book of Revelation. Instead, I am drawing some inferences from these chapters that reflect on the ministry of associations and associational missionaries.

I. 3 Interesting Features of the Churches of the Asia Minor Association

1. Paul had been the associational missionary/catalytic missionary/church planter strategist; i.e., the churches there were for the most part started by Paul or people disciplined and trained by Paul.
2. These 7 churches were not the whole of the churches in Asia Minor, but probably were representative of them all, and also representative of churches in every age, including today.
3. Other leaders served in the area through the years: Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, John Mark, Titus, and yes, the Apostle John who had outlived all the other apostles. John had retired to Ephesus, and now was temporarily living at Patmos, and small rocky island which could have been known as "little rock."

II. 3 Interesting Features of Jesus' Profile of the Churches

1. The Profile (message) was from Jesus. Today's ACP is the churches report by the churches. This Annual Church Profile was the report given by Jesus, the Lord of the churches.
2. The Profile (message) was sent to Pastors for themselves and through them to the churches and the needs of the churches. By using the terms, you and your, in the singular, it is obvious Jesus is speaking to them in a straight-forward, personal way.
3. The Profile was sent through an intermediary, a respected leader--the missionary gifted John the apostle. Perhaps, today that could be the associational missionary.

III. 7 Types of Churches (As seen in Jesus' descriptions)

The churches that Jesus was profiling and John was ministering to were not a whole lot different than what exists today. Some were conflicted, while others were afflicted. Others were confused, or compromised, expired or committed and consistent; while others were contradictory, insensitive, or just lukewarm. The churches of the AMA were not unlike the churches with which we work and minister.

1. Ephesus was a **conflicted** church. It was in conflict with some heretics over their doctrine and in conflict with Jesus over what would be their first love.
2. Smyrna was **afflicted** by persecution, opposition, and the resulting poverty; though Jesus called them rich.
3. Pergamos was **confused** over doctrine and over which direction to follow—whether to follow the perverted teaching of Balaam, or Nicolaitans, or to follow the path of the faithful witness Antipas.
4. Thyatira was a **compromised** church, having compromised itself by adopting the leadership of the lady leader that Jesus called Jezebel. Their ethics and morality had become more pagan than Christian.
5. Sardis had **expired**. It had the reputation of be a "lively" church, but Jesus said it was dead.
6. Philadelphia was a **committed** and **consistent** church, with a missionary heart.
7. Laodicea was a **contradictory** church filled with inconsistency and insensitivity. Jesus called it "lukewarm", and indicated that its character was nauseating.

IV. 7 Realities of Response (to the churches)

1. Every church had **problems**. Some had similar problems to others. Even Faithful Philadelphia was said to be of “little strength.”
2. Every church had **potential**. Jesus spoke of overcomers and winners in each church. All were churches with **promise**, and the promises were from God. Even Insensitive Laodicea who seemed to have evicted Jesus from their premises had Jesus knocking to enter her doors once again.
3. Every church had its **secrets**, but Jesus was not out of the loop. Jesus said, “I know your deeds.” That statement can be either comforting or threatening, depending on our faithfulness to God.
4. Jesus has the **necessary thing** for each church to respond to the need that exists: He will correct an Ephesus, by putting its candlestick in its rightful place, if Jesus is not in the church’s rightful place. He will resurrect “dead” Sardis. He will keep the door open for the Philadelphian church with the open door, missionary heart.
5. **Jesus is all each church needs**, but problems sometime cloud the church and they then need reminders. Often they come by way of the missionary leader who is listening to God; who is in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.
6. Jesus calls the church to **hear** what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
7. Since Jesus walks among the candlesticks with the angels in his right hand (in his power), it becomes a matter of **stewardship** for us when we serve and minister to the churches and their leadership. The churches are his, and he walks among them. The pastors are his and are in His hand. The churches are there to give light, and the pastor is there to shine for Christ. We have a stewardship responsibility as we deal with His ministers, His churches, and His ministries. God help us as associational teams and sister churches to remember, recover, and reclaim the heart of the steward as well as the heart of the missionary.

Maurice L. Hitt, October 19, 2009
Associational Missionary’s Report
Annual Meeting, WRBA
Jesus Profile of Asia Minor Association