

Revelation 2-3: Is It Worth It?



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Hook

Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day?

Where Were You?

A. [Where were you?]

1. I was in a warehouse in Dallas, Texas checking inventory.
 - (a) My friend Diane came out
 - (b) and asked if I heard about the two planes that hit the World Trade Center.
 - (c) I said, “No” and went back to work.
2. I had no concept what happened...
 - (a) Until I went into the breakroom a little later...
 - (b) And saw folks huddle around the TV.
 - (c) I couldn't believe what I saw...
 - the devastation and death.
 - (d) I eventually went into the men's room and sobbed.

B. [The Journey]

1. I was **laid off** six weeks later.
2. I knew things were bad when I went to a **job fair** at a hotel in north Dallas.
 - (a) Hundreds of people filing toward the entrance...
 - (b) All dressed very professionally.
 - (c) When I finally reached the recruiter's table...
 - (d) I had 30 seconds to present my case and handover my resume.
 - (e) Nothing came from that encounter.
3. I eventually got a **job** after Christmas.
 - (a) But my boss resigned because he refused to **cook** the **books**.
 - (b) I quit the next day.
 - (c) Eventually the owner went to prison.
4. **Four kids. One wife. No job. Unable to continue seminary.**
5. Then the **perfect** opportunity came along.
 - (a) I connected with the Treasurer during the interview...
 - (b) And I knew the HR director.
 - (c) It was near the seminary so I could resume school.
 - (d) It was a fulltime job that **only** required 35 hours per week.
 - (e) God had closed one door... only to open a better one.
 - (f) Except he didn't.
 - (g) I didn't get an offer.

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C. [Worship Songs]

1. The discouragement **crushed** me.
2. I remember one Sunday at church...
 - (a) The worship team sang about God's **goodness**.
 - (b) But I couldn't sing.
 - (c) I just stood there.
3. I had to face a tough question:
 - (a) Is God really **good**?
 - (b) Is it worth it to follow Jesus?

Book

*We are starting a new **series** at Redeemer Church*

on the first few chapters of the Book of Revelation.

*I'm providing an **overview** this morning and highlighting one key **theme**.*

Pastor Jaysson will flesh out the details in the coming weeks.

Let's pray as we begin.

Prayer

1. Father, the question on the table this morning is...
 - (a) Is it worth it to serve you?
 - (b) Why should we keep the faith...
 - why should we trust Jesus...
 - when our life crumbles.
2. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as I teach.
3. Speak to us through your incredible Word.
4. Show us that it's worth it.
5. In Jesus name, Amen.

Overview

A. Purpose

1. The Book of Revelation was written by a man named John,
 - who was a follower
 - and close friend of Jesus.
 - And he was an eyewitness to everything recorded in the book.
2. John was given the message by God the Father...
 - to "**reveal**" Jesus, his Son.
 - That's why it's called "Revelation."
 - It's written to reveal Jesus.

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3. John encourages us to **hold fast** to our faith in Jesus...
even when experiencing
 - severe persecution,
 - intense suffering,
 - and the fallout of God's judgment.
4. Much of the book describes these terrifying **cycles of judgment**.
5. Revelation concludes with amazing pictures of our **future** home...
 - when **heaven** comes to earth
 - and God **dwells** with mankind.
6. There's no more **death**, or **tears**,
 - or mourning, or suffering,
 - or evil of any kind.
 - I Can Only Image.
7. John **points** to these pictures to **challenge** us to be
 - victorious, to overcome, to **conquer**,
 - to be **faithful** witnesses... even in death.
 - Because it's worth it to **hold fast** to Jesus.

B. [Context]

1. **Chapter 1** of Revelation presents a majestic picture of the **Risen Jesus**.
2. In **Chapters 2 and 3**,
 - this Risen Jesus writes a **short letter**
 - to seven real churches in the ancient world.
3. We'll **examine** these seven letters in this new preaching **series**.

This morning...

C. [Preview]

1. I'll walk through the first letter...
 - To illustrate the common structure across these seven letters.
2. Then we will then track one theme through each remaining letter.
 - I hope to convince you:
 - To **hold fast** to Jesus, because it's worth it.

Please open your Bibles to Revelation Chapter 2, verse 1.

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#1 = Ephesus (2:1-7)

Each letter has around seven components.

*The **first** component tells the primary **destination** for the letter.*

For example, in verse 1 we read:

1a	To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:
----	---

A. Church (2:1a)

1. This first letter is written to the **church** in an ancient city called **Ephesus**.
 - (c) Since it is written to a church, we know it is intended for believers.
 - (d) The amazing promises that we'll uncover are only for those who **trust** Jesus.
2. Note that that the letter is addressed specifically to the **angel** of the church.
 - (a) This likely indicates that an angel watches over that church and is **responsible** for it.
 - (b) And if that's true, it's also likely an angel **protects** Redeemer Church.

*The **second** component of each letter **reveals** amazing characteristics of the Risen Jesus.*

B. Risen Jesus (2:1b)

1b	The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands .
----	--

1. We know from Chapter 1 that the “seven lampstands” are the seven ancient churches.
 - (a) The “lampstand” **image** indicates that church
 - should shine the **light** of Jesus into the community.
 - (b) The “walking” image shows
 - Jesus’ intimate **concern** and fellowship with the seven churches.

*In the **third** component, the Risen Jesus **praises** the church for her faithfulness.*

Jesus praises six of the seven churches. The lukewarm church receives no praise.

Listen to the praise Ephesus receives:

C. Praise (2:2a, 3)

2a	I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance ...
3	I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.

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1. The Risen Jesus—who walks & fellowships with the seven churches—
 - This Jesus **praises** the believers in Ephesus
 - for their hard labor and patient endurance...
2. He **knows** what they are going through...
 - That they are **suffering** for the sake of his **name**.

*In the **fourth** component, Jesus then **rebukes** the churches.*

***Five** of the seven churches **earn** a rebuke.*

Here's what Jesus says to Ephesus:

D. Rebuke (2:4)

4	But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.
---	--

1. The Ephesian believers no longer **love** Jesus like they did.
 - (a) Like couples that **divorce** when their kids leave the nest,
 - (b) the Ephesians' love for Jesus grew **cold** over time.

*In the **fifth** component... Jesus issues strong **commands** to each church.*

Jesus gives these orders to Ephesus:

E. Command (5a)

5a	Remember therefore from where you have fallen. Repent , and do the works you did at first.
----	--

1. If we **categorize** the commands to the seven churches, we find:
 - (a) Five churches are told to **repent**.
 - (b) Three churches are told to **hold fast**.
 - (c) If you do the math, then you see that one needs to **both** repent and hold fast.
 - (d) That's probably a fair **summary** of the Christian life.
 - Sometimes we need to repent.
 - Sometimes we need to hold fast.
 - Sometimes it's both.
2. The Ephesian believers... they need to **repent**.
 - Because they abandoned their first love.
3. Notice they are not told to stir up some emotion.
 - (a) They are told to **act**...
 - "to do the works you did at first."
 - To return to their first love.
 - (b) Again, just like in a marriage...
 - if I pursue my wife Fran and show love to her,
 - the emotions will follow.

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The *sixth* component is a challenge to *listen up*, to pay attention.
It's kind of a strange statement:

F. Listen Up! (7a)

7a	He who has an ear , let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches .
----	--

There are four key words in this verse.

1. **Hear.**
 - (a) When we tell are kids to “listen up,” what do we mean?
 - “Drew, the curfew is 11:00 pm tonight.”
 - “Drew, did you hear me?”
 - Am I concerned about Drew’s hearing?
 - No. It’s an obedience check.
2. **Ear.**
 - (a) How many of you have at least one ear?
 - (b) If so, then you are included in this challenge
 - and you need to pay attention.
3. **Churches**
 - (a) Notice that the “churches” is used here, rather than the “church” in verse 1.
 - In verse 7, Jesus is addressing multiple churches.
 - This means that our letter written to Ephesus...
 - Is actually binding on all churches...
 - everywhere...
 - in all time periods
 - including Redeemer Church.
4. **Spirit**
 - (a) The **words** of this letter are from the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) Think about that...
 - This letter is **dictated** by the Risen Jesus...
 - Using **words** from the Holy Spirit...
 - **Recorded** by John, an eyewitness to Jesus and to everything in Revelation...
 - **Addressed** to an angel who watches over a real church in the city of Ephesus
 - With a message both relevant and **binding** to us at Redeemer Church.
 - (c) How important is this letter?
 - Perhaps you should make a special effort to hear Jaysson the next seven weeks.

Ancient authors used *repetition* to emphasize what was important.

7a	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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1. The phrase:
 - (a) “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
 - (b) This phrase is **repeated** to each church...
 - Word for word...
 - And letter for letter.
 - (c) An ancient writer can’t **shout** any louder than this.
2. I need audience **participation** to help communicate Jesus’ heart.
3. Now I know **Carol Burnett** was not from Ephesus.
 - (a) But I would like to borrow her sign-off **signal**
 - (b) To prompt you to say these words...
 - “If you have an ear...Listen up!”
 - That’s shorthand for Jesus’ full statement.

*In the **seventh** and final component of each letter,
the Risen Jesus makes magnificent **promises** about our future.
The promise to Ephesus is found in verse 7.
It starts off with these words:*

G. Promise (7b)

7b	To the one who conquers :
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1. The word “conquer” means to “win victory over.”¹
2. It’s used for **sports** and **military** comparisons.²
3. If one football team **conquers** the other...
 - (a) Is the score 7 to 6?
 - (b) Or 56 to 0?
4. It’s **superiority** and victory over a **defeated** foe.
5. **Question:** How big was Jesus’ victory?
 - (a) Barely win by recovering a fumble?
 - (b) Never in doubt?
 - (c) It was a guaranteed, decisive, eternal victory.
6. Jesus **describes** us as **conquerors**.
 - (a) We are **victorious**... because Jesus won the victory.
 - (b) We **conquer**... because Jesus conquered Satan, sin, and death itself.

¹ Danker, 2009, p. 241.

² Osborne, 2002, p. 122.

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*As we finish verse 7, we find a magnificent promise to those that conquer.
It reads:*

7b	To the one who conquers: I will grant to eat of the tree of life , which is in the paradise of God.
----	--

7. We read about this **tree** in the final chapter of Revelation.
 - (a) The **river of life** flows from the throne of God and the Risen Jesus (22:1).
 - God and Jesus are the **source** of the river and the source of all life.
 - (b) The **tree of life** spans across this river (22:2).
 - The tree bears a different crop of fruit each month (22:2).
 - (c) And we will live forever in this new Garden.
 - (d) It will be Paradise, because we will see God's face (22:4).

*My challenge... based on the promise in this letter is:
Be one who conquerors...*

7b	Hold fast to Jesus. It's worth it.
----	---

Let's blitz through the remaining six letters.

Start in verse 8 for the second church.

#2 = Smyrna (2:8-11)

A. Church (8a)

8a	And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:
----	--

In verse 8 we see that...

1. Jesus' second letter is to the church in Smyrna.
 - I understand from Church History...
 - This is where **Smurfs** come from.

We continue in verse 8 and see that...

B. Risen Jesus (8b)

8b	The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life .
----	---

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1. The Risen Jesus describes himself:
 - (a) He is “the first and the last”...
 - And by implication everything in between.
 - (b) And he is “the one who died and came to life.”
2. This of course is a reference
 - (a) to Jesus’ death on the **cross** as payment for our sins...
 - (b) And his bodily **resurrection** from the dead after three days in the grave.
3. Jesus **conquered** death by his resurrection.
 - He won a decisive and eternal **victory**.

In verse 9 Jesus says:

C. Praise (9a)

9a	I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich).
----	--

1. The church in Smyrna was suffering and poor...
 - Probably because of persecution.

So Jesus gives them this command in verse 10:

D. Command (10b)

10b	Be faithful unto death , and I will give you the crown of life .
-----	--

1. Wow!
2. We are starting to get a **picture** of what it means to **conquer**, to overcome, to be a victor.
3. We are to be “full of faith” in Jesus... even at the threat of death.
 - (a) We keep the faith... especially when **suffering**.
 - (b) We hold fast to Jesus... even in our **poverty**.
4. Jesus has the **cred** to ask us to **die**...
 - because he just reminded us he is the one who **died**.
5. He has the power to give us the **crown** of life,
 - because rose and is **living** now.

We have the call to listen in verse 11.

E. Listen Up! (11a)

11a	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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Then the Risen Jesus makes an incredible promise to this church.

F. Promise (11b)

11b	The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death .
-----	---

1. We read about a horrible place of **judgment** at the end of Chapter 20.
 - (a) If a person's name is not written in the **Book of Life** (20:15),
 - that person will be thrown into the **Lake of Fire** (20:15).
 - (b) They will be **excluded** from God's presence... forever.
 - (c) And they will be **tortured** by fire...
 - day and night
 - forever and ever (20:10).
 - (d) This **Lake of Fire** is also called the **Second Death** (20:14).
2. Jesus promises
 - (a) that those who **conquer**...
 - (b) those who **hold fast** to the faith
 - Will **never** be **harm**ed by the **Second Death**.
 - They will never **burn** in the **Lake of Fire**.

11b	Hold fast to Jesus. It's worth it.
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#3 = Pergamum (2:12-17)

Let move down to verse 12 to look at the third letter.

A. Church (12a)

12a	And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:
-----	--

1. Verse 12 shows this third letter going to the ancient city of **Pergamum**.

Here's how Jesus praises this church...

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B. Praise (13b)

13b	Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness , who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
-----	--

1. The Pergamum believers already did what Jesus commanded the folks in **Smyrna**.
 - (a) They **hold fast** to Jesus' name... his reputation, his character.
 - (b) They refuse to **deny** the faith... even when faced with death.
 - (c) Antipas was a witness **full of faith**... so he **died** for his faith.
 - (d) The word "witness" in this verse is often used of **martyrs**.
 - A "witness" attests to the truth of something...
 - A faithful "witness" for Jesus...
 - attests to the truth of his **death** and **resurrection**...
 - We become "martyrs" in the technical sense if we die because of our testimony.
2. Let me ask a question.
 - (a) If the authorities hauled off Pastor Jaysson...
 - And then executed him...
 - (b) And then they started knocking on my door and your door...
 - To ask, "Are you a Christian?"
 - (c) How would you respond?

C. Listen Up! (17a)

17a	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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3. Listen to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches...
 - like those in **Afghanistan** and China.

*Jesus makes two promises to the believers of Pergamum.
Here's the first one.*

D. Promises (17b)

17b	To the one who conquers : (a) I will give some of the hidden manna ...
-----	---

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1. If you remember from the Old Testament...
 - (a) God provided daily bread called “manna”
 - For more than two million Israelites...
 - For forty years in the wilderness.
2. All of our physical needs will be met in our future home.
 - No one will ever hunger or even thirst again (7:16).

And this is the second promise:

17b	To the one who conquers ... <ol style="list-style-type: none">(b) and I will give him a white stone,<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ with a new name written on the stone▪ that no one knows▪ except the one who receives it.
-----	---

3. Jesus will give conquers a **white stone**.
 - (a) This is likely a valuable prize for their victory.
 - (b) White indicates their purity and righteousness.
4. This stone will have **new name** from Jesus written upon it...
 - (a) A name that identifies the person’s essential character
 - (b) A name from Jesus that **only** the overcomer knows.
5. Do you ever feel like no one **knows** who you truly are?
 - (a) Part of the **craziness** in our society results...
 - from a desperate **search** for one’s “true identity.”
 - Jesus knows your true identity.
 - He will give you a priceless stone **engraved** with his **intimate** name for you.

17b	Hold fast to Jesus. It’s worth it.
-----	---

#4 = Thyatira (2:18-29)

We come to the fourth church in verse 18.

A. Church (18a)

18a	And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:
-----	--

1. The fourth church is in a city called **Thyatira**.

If we drop down to verse 25, we see one of the commands Jesus gives this church.

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B. Command (25a)

25a	Only hold fast what you have until I come.
-----	---

1. The command is similar to what we heard with Pergamum.
2. This church needs to **hold fast**...
 - cling to Jesus...
 - keep the faith.
3. For how long?
 - Until Jesus **returns**.
4. We at **Redeemer** are responsible to **obey** this command as well.
 - We need to **hold fast** to Jesus until he returns.

We learn more about what it means to conquer in verse 26.

C. Promises (26-28)

26	The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end ...
----	--

1. The phrases “he who conquers” is parallel with “he who keeps my works.”
2. Jesus indicates...
 - We **conquer** by **keeping** his works.
 - We obey Jesus and keep his commandments.
 - We walk the talk.
3. For how long?
 - Until the end...
4. Notice the repetition from verse 25.
 - In 25... We **hold fast** until he **returns**.
 - In 26... We **keep** his **works** until the **end**.
5. That’s how we become victorious conquerors.

Jesus makes two promises to conquerors in Thyatira. The first is in verse 26.

26	The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, (a) to him I will give authority over the nations...
----	--

6. First, he will give conquerors **authority** over the nations.
 - Let that sink in a bit.
 - We will rule with Jesus.

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The second promise is in verse 28.

28	(b) And I will give him the morning star .
----	---

7. Jesus will give us the **Morning Star**.
 - Any idea who that is?
 - The **end** of Revelation **reveals** that it's Jesus himself (22:16).
 - The greatest gift of all.

28	Hold fast to Jesus. It's worth it.
----	---

D. Listen Up! (29)

29	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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Let's move on to Chapter 3 to learn about the fifth church.

#5 = Sardis (3:1-6)

A. Church (1a)

1	And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:
---	--

1. The fifth letter goes to **Sardis**.

Let's skip down to verse 5 to look at three promises.

B. Promises (5)

5a	The one who conquers (a) will be clothed thus in white garments
----	--

1. Folks often wonder if we'll wear clothes in our future home.
2. The answer is yes... **white** garments.
3. Ironically, they'll be washed **white** by the blood of Jesus (7:14).
4. These white garments reflect our unfathomable purity.
 - Always pure **actions**.
 - Always pure **thoughts**.
 - Always pure **motives**.

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The second promise in verse 5 is this:

5b	(b) and I will never blot his name out of the Book of Life .
----	---

5. We read about Jesus' **Book of Life** several times in Revelation.
 - (a) If our name is **not** written in his book, we'll be thrown in the **Lake of Fire** (22:15).
 - (b) If our name **is** written in his book, we'll be allowed to live in the **future home** (21:27)
 - Where heaven comes to earth (21:2)
 - And God **dwells** with humankind (21:3)
 - In the **City** of God called the New Jerusalem (21:2; 9-27).
6. The promise here is incredible.
 - (c) A conqueror's **name** will never be **erased** from the Book of Life.
 - We will dwell with God in his city...
 - And we'll never be burned by the Lake of fire.

Here's the third promise:

5c	(c) I will confess his name <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ before my Father▪ and before his angels.
----	--

7. Jesus will confirm he knows us and that we are his.

5	Hold fast to Jesus. It's worth it.
---	---

C. Listen Up! (6)

6	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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#6 = Philadelphia (3:7-13)

The letter to the sixth church starts in verse 7.

A. Church (7a)

7a	And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:
----	--

1. Any folks from Pennsylvania?
2. This letter is addressed to a church in Philadelphia.

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We find two promises in verse 12.

B. Promises (12)

12a	The one who conquers , (a) I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it...
-----	---

1. There's a lot going on with this image.
2. At a minimum, the temple represents the presence of God.
 - At least one aspect of this promise
 - Is that we will always be in God's presence.

Here's the second promise.

12b	The one who conquers... , (b) and I will write on him <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the name of my God,▪ and the name of the city of my God,<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ the new Jerusalem,▪ which comes down from my God out of heaven,▪ and my own new name.
-----	---

3. Jesus will write three names on us.
 - (a) God the Father's name.
 - (b) The name of God's city
 - (c) And Jesus' new name.
4. A few implications are³:
 - (a) We belong to God's.
 - We are his children.
 - We bear his name, just like my four kids bear my name.
 - (b) We are citizens of God's city.
 - We belong there. No one will ever kick us out.
 - (c) We will share in Jesus' new name.
 - We participate in his reputation and fame.

12	Hold fast to Jesus. It's worth it.
----	---

C. Listen Up! (13)

13	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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³ Osborne, 2002, p. 198-199.

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#7 = Laodicea (3:14-22)

The seventh and final letter starts in verse 14.

A. Church (14a)

14a	And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
-----	--

1. This letter is addressed to the angel of the church in Laodicea.

*Skip all the way to verse 21 for the incredible promise to this church and to **us**.*

B. Promises (21)

21	The one who conquers , I will grant him to sit with me on my throne ...
----	--

1. Wow!
2. Jesus will **share** his **throne** with us.
 - He will allow us to sit and rule with him.
3. Do you ever feel **powerless**, like you have no voice?
 - It won't be that way in our future home.
 - We will help rule the world.

Let's read the entire verse now.

21	The one who conquers , I will grant him to sit with me on my throne , as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.
----	---

4. Jesus links our conquering with his conquering.
 - We are victorious because he won the victory.
5. Jesus **describes** believers as **conquerors** in each of the seven letters.
 - (a) How many times does Jesus need to say something for it to be true?
 - (b) How important is it if the Risen Jesus says it seven times?
 - (c) Also, remember each letter contains the words of the Holy Spirit.
 - (d) And remember that the entire book was given to John by God the Father.

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6. Another **question**:
- (a) Do you see yourself as a **conqueror**, a **victor**?
 - (b) Or as one constantly **defeated**?

 - (c) I believe your answer **shows whom you're trusting**.
 - (d) So if you don't see yourself **ultimately** as a conqueror,
 - I encourage you to **repent**
 - and **believe** God's Word.

C. Listen Up! (22)

22	If you have an ear, LISTEN UP!
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Look

Recap

Let's recap the promises.

A. The Risen Jesus makes the following promises to conquerors...

- To those that **hold fast** to Jesus until he returns.
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1. We will eat from the **Tree of Life** and live forever. [Ephesus]
 2. The **Lake of Fire** will never burn us. [Smyrna]
 3. All of our physical **needs** will be met. [Pergamum]
 4. Jesus will give us a priceless stone **engraved** with our **special** name. [Pergamum]
 5. We will **rule** with Jesus over the nations. [Thyatira]
 6. Jesus will give us himself... the **Morning Star**. [Thyatira]
 7. We will wear **white clothes** reflecting incredible purity. [Sardis]
 8. Our name will never be erased from the **Book of Life**. [Sardis]
 9. Jesus will **testify** that he **knows** us and that we are his. [Sardis]
 10. We will always be in God's **presence**. [Philadelphia]
 11. Jesus will write the **Father's** name on us... showing we **belong** to him. [Philadelphia]
 12. He will write on us the name of God's **city**... to show we are **citizens**. [Philadelphia]
 13. He will write his own **new** name on us... sharing his **fame** with us. [Philadelphia]
 14. Jesus will share his throne with us. [Laodicea]

I don't know about you...

B. I think it's worth it... to hold fast to Jesus.

Revelation 2-3: Is It Worth It?



Took

Application

- A. When you lose your job and God doesn't come through...**
 - Hold fast Jesus. It's worth it.
- B. When the doctor breaks your heart with devastating news...**
 - Hold fast Jesus. It's worth it.
- C. If you spouse betrays you and then abandons you...**
 - Hold fast Jesus. It's worth it.
- D. If your child walks away from his/her faith...**
 - Hold fast Jesus and keep **your** faith. It's worth it.

Prayer

1. Thank you for these incredible promises. It will all be worth it.
2. Thank you that you will enable us to conquer, to be victorious, to keep the faith.
3. We love you and trust you.