

## **STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD – BY ERIC D. SMITH**

### CHAPTER 10 - DEAR PASTOR: IF GOD WOULD SPEAK TO YOU

*“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”*

*– Revelation 1:20*

While the earlier mysteries that have been discussed in this book have dealt with either previously hidden knowledge of God given to the church so they could reach a lost world or a revelation of a future religious system (now revealed), this mystery involves God sending messages to individual churches. While many pastors pray that God would speak to them, few would ever pray for a rebuke from God when He speaks. Yet, if a rebuke would help save your soul or those under your care, would you readily accept the message? The mystery revealed here is the understanding that God sends angels to seven of the churches of Asia Minor to deliver such a message.

One church, Ephesus, had a problem with departing from their first love. (Revelation 2:1-6) We can only speculate what this first love may have been. It could be they departed from loving the truth of God’s Word. It could be that they departed from the worship of God Himself. Or maybe, they have departed from the love of evangelizing a lost and dying world. Whatever this love may have been, unless they repented, Jesus was ready to remove their candlestick out of its place. This is a reference that they would no longer be considered a saved church before the eyes of Jesus.

Two other churches, Pergamos and Thyatira, had doctrinal errors which allowed sin into their belief system. (Revelation 2:12-29) To Pergamos, Jesus even said, *“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”* (Revelation 2:16) Ephesians 6:17 allows us to know that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. How strange it sounds to hear Jesus telling a church that He will fight them with the word of God.

### **Questions, Discussions and Notes**

1. Whether you are a pastor or not, when you pray to God, how willing are you to accept rebuke if it came from God?
2. Which is of more value, your pride in what you believe, or your eternal soul? In other words, are you willing to change if God’s Word shows you something different?
3. What do you think Jesus may have been referring to as their first love? Explain your answer.
4. Do you think that there are still Christian churches today that will resist Jesus in doctrinal issues?

Another one of the churches mentioned, Sardis, thought they were alive, but Jesus said they were a dead church (Revelation 3:1) *Strong's Concordance* tells us that the Greek word that is used for dead means, "one that has breathed his last, lifeless". This may suggest to us that this church was only going through the motions of having church, showing up because of tradition, but was spiritually dead.

Another church, Laodicea, was lukewarm and thought that they did not need anything. (Revelation 3:14-20) Jesus described His reaction to this church as wanting to vomit them out. They thought they were rich, but Jesus said they were poor and wretched. They were proud of their elegant dress, but Jesus said they were naked and shameful before Him. Jesus described Himself being on the outside of this church and knocking, wanting in. This church did not even know they were operating without Jesus.

Only two of the seven churches seem to have no fault mentioned - the church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-10) and the church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-12). Notice the words that Jesus praises Philadelphia with when He says, "thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). That should be the desire of every church and of every believer.

5. Do you think YOUR worship or YOUR love for God could re-ignite an entire church atmosphere? Explain your answer.
  
6. Lukewarm means neither hot nor cold. Do you think that Jesus was saying that being an "average" Christian with average obedience to Him was unacceptable? Explain your answer.
  
7. After looking at the messages to all seven churches, make a list of characteristics that a church / individual should have.