

REVELATION

Revelation 2:1-7 (The Church of Ephesus)

***Secret shopper: CFA =Jesus is walking among the churches (His Church; His Bride)**

7 churches in Asia were chosen bc represented 7 main postal districts in Asia minor, and would be the hubs/central points for disseminating information to all the churches in that region:

Ephesus the city: 250k people; **NYC of that time**; culture setter/"Influencer"/**Artemis**/**Diana** 7th w Ephesus: 52AD Paul; 65AD Timothy; 70's? AD John pastored/wrote Gospel, 1,2,3 John from Eph.

=Flagship Church -no wonder why Jesus started w/Eph. = John's own congregation

***Note** to each of the 7 Churches = Jesus **Commendation, Correction, Call to Action**

[Commendation/affirmation/encouragement; Correction/rebuke=**Repent** & Call to obedience]

READ Revelation 2:1-7

***Main Point: In faithfulness to Christ, His heart, & His Church, we are to joyfully endure whatever this life holds to be ready for the next.**

Vs. 1: To the **angel** of the church in Ephesus write: The One who **holds** the seven stars in His right hand, the One who **walks** among [in the middle of] the seven golden lampstands, says this:

-Who is the Angel/Messenger in each church? The actual messenger taking this scroll to 'em?

As in the prophets in the OT, the responsibility of God's **prophets, priests, and pastors** was to render God's *message* and get out of the way so God can work His purpose and plan for His *covenant* people. They were to **represent** God and be His **mouthpiece** in the heart-language of the people to hear a clear gospel & call to repentance.

****It makes most sense, within the scriptural context, that the 7 stars are the messengers who are the local pastor/elder of each congregation.** The lampstands are the churches **holding high light**

*It is significant that the movement described here of Jesus' interaction with the 7 churches displays Jesus' **active** presence, guidance, and correction of His Bride in each local expression.

A. The **CHURCH** (all Christians everywhere/for all time) & B. The **local church** – Jesus *IS* there.

-Zephaniah 3:17 "**The Lord your God is among you...**"

-Mt. 18:20 "**Where two or more are gathered in my Name, I am there with them**"-omnipresence

-Mt. 28:20 "**And surely I am WITH you always, to the very end of this age**" *Emmanuel*="G. w/us"

=Jesus **HOLDS** each Church: We are His; in His right Hand (authority) we exist by His authority and the Church speaks God's Word (Christo-centric) = we speak His authority -Mt. 18:18-19

=Jesus walks in the midst of; in the middle of; the Church/His churches =His presence is near!

***Who has access to your home? YOU do! You have the keys (no one else); u have auth. = u own it**

*Jesus has **Authority** and **Access** over every church bc we are **HIS** Church, His **Bride**, His **Body**!

1. COMMENDATION:

Vs. 2: *I know* [intimate knowledge; experiential knowledge "w/them"] **your deeds and your labor and perseverance [steadfastness]** Jesus commends the Ephesian church for their hard work in the gospel, their faithful pursuit of discipleship, and enduring persecution. =**toil/sweat/blood**
=Jesus is commending the church for faithfully giving their all for the cause of Christ!

and that you cannot tolerate evil people, -the leadership of the church is discerning & calling those in sin to repentance, and those who are unrepentant to leave the church (**cut cancer out**)

and you have put those who call themselves apostles to the test, and they are not, and you found them *to be false*; The leaders are also discerning of false prophets/false Apostles who would be trying to pull people away from the flock; fleece them; abuse them; take advantage of them. The leadership passed on the next generation of leaders (DISCIPLSHIP) what they learned from Paul 40 years earlier as he was on his way to die for the gospel in Rome:

-Acts 20:28-31 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you ^[u]overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He ^[v]purchased ^[w]with His own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore, be on the alert”

-Jesus is commending this Church for their faithful protection of His Bride, God’s people, the flock and that they have protected the Word of God and right theology. This pleased the Lord!

Vs. 6: AND you have this, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Jesus gets very specific in this heretical group in Ephesus trying to influence the church and bring heresy and division into the church. The Nicolaitans were a small but influential group from the early church -thought to be followers of Nicolas (one of the first deacons in Jerusalem) who led believers away into spiritual license: abusing holiness and embracing sexual immorality, self-indulgence, and heathenism within Christianity. [Iraeneus 160AD stated the “*Nicolaitans lived lives of unrestrained indulgence*”] **Jesus said He hated this!** Church, take note! **How we live & how we lead MATTERS to Jesus!!!** Jesus wants to protect His children (**no snakes in crib**)/**lies or laxity**

-Matthew 18:6 “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” This Church protected Christ’s Name & His Church **from moral invasion!**

Vs. 3: and you have perseverance and have endured on account of My name, and have not become weary. 2x Jesus commends them for their faithful perseverance & enduring through threats, hardships, persecution, and attacks on the church and her leaders. Because of Jesus and the cause of Christ the Christians in Ephesus have risked much and suffered much, and endured much – *they NEVER gave up!* **Through conflict, ingratitude, criticism, lies, disappointment ...attacks from without and dissension from within the Church was still going,** still discipling, still influencing others...Jesus encourages the Church because they have been faithful in adversity =The Church was built on a strong **foundation** of Jesus & the gospel. =**Not easily moved/swayed**
***How many storms have you endured? Your marriage? Turbulence/plane ship/storm**
=shipwrecked some without a foundation on Jesus!!! He is the ROCK!!! Unmoving!! Is He Yours?

2. Correction

Vs. 4: But... I have this against you, that you have left your first love. This simple, short, rebuke is gutting! A fatal flaw and the heart of the Lord’s message to the Ephesians!!!!

-**This was a loss of love for the Savior** (forgetting the reason why we are following Him) [Perhaps it was a love of love for His Bride? The least of these? The Lost? ...bc when you loose your love for the Lord, you cannot truly love anyone else [including self] w/ a divine love]

-**Have you ever fallen out of love? Just emotionally checked out for a season. Heart cold/blah???**

*You have forgotten me in all the busyness of being Christian, of “doing church,” of building Christianity. ☹ **The Institutional Church can thrive and still be devoid of Jesus.** i.e. Mt. 7:13-22

***Preparation for a wedding, tons of time, money, decisions, stress, activity =easy to forget**

-Jesus rebukes the Church for going through Mechanical Orthodoxy (rigid, heartless, devotion)

*Would you be guilty of this morning? – Just going through the motions/heart disconnected?

-Matthew 15:8/Is 29:13 “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

*The honeymoon was over.

This church lost their first love of Jesus because of distractions? (have devotions daily -no spirit?)
=reading through the Bible, Sun. service, tithe =but NO heart...just going through the motions

-Was the loss of the love for the Lord because of time/distance/boredom/distractions/idols??

-was it because of real persecution, hardship, affliction and attacks that their hearts became bitter? Discouraged? Unforgiving toward their oppressors?

Has our love waned from the Lord? Have we walked away from intimacy with Jesus?

-Spiritual apathy? Coldness in your heart toward spiritual things? Unaffected by others' pain?

Like looking healthy on the outside, but an unknown, ever-growing cancer lingers inside. deadly

-Ps. 78:36-37 “But they deceived God with their mouths, and lied to Him with their tongues. / Their hearts were disloyal to Him, and they were unfaithful to His covenant.”

Vs. 5: Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the deeds you did at first; Jesus is not unclear here to the Church. Walking away from a love relationship w/Him is sin
=**Repentance** (*turning* from the sin & running to the Lord; rejecting that old habit/idol/hidden sin)

The Lie from Satan in the Garden of Eden; the original lie.....there is something better than God and God is holding out on you! The goodness of the Gospel is a reminder -there's Nothing better than Jesus. He has done everything for US. Jesus IS our everything. Nothing better, greater, more satisfying than Him. ALL ELSE is a lie, a counterfeit pleasure, a fleeting joy. Jesus is Better!

In repentance, Jesus demands that we run back to Him; love Him first and most bc **only He** has redeemed us, bought us back, washed us, cleansed us, forgave us, adopted us, gave us life & righte

-We are to love the Lord God (heart first; head second). The fruit of true sacrificial love is obedience to His commands/The WORD & His plan for your life (holiness) to love what He loves

-2 John 6 “And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.” Love is God's command to your heart!

Warning: Jesus says if they refused, or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. This is NOT a threat, it is a promise! Do you know of any churches that have closed their doors because the people grew cold in their love for the Lord; their hearts grew restless with obedience; their hearts became indifferent to the lost/least of the
-How many churches close their doors every year. Reject Christ as King; Reject His Word as truth
*4500 churches close each yr here; Europe: Churches=nightclubs; restaurants; libraries; cult. ctr

Vs. 7: The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.”

Proof of your salvation is that you endure to the end. In the end, we get Christ, He is the Prize of our souls! We get eternal life WITH Him... “eat from the tree of life” = we get to have eter. life!!
=Jesus is the Prize of eternity!! **In faithfulness to Christ, His heart, & His Church, we are to joyfully endure whatever this life holds to be ready for the next.**

Summary:

1. The Ephesian Church is faithful to work hard for the gospel, to labor for souls, right teaching.
2. Discipleship was still a passionate pursuit of this church in a spiritually dark city.
3. This church preached the Word, held to right/orthodox theology/trained & planted churches
4. This church sought to root out heresy in all its forms and cut out dissenters/who sow division
5. BUT....they forget their vibrant relationship with the One for whom they were doing all this.

-The Ephesian Church faded in their love relationship w/Jesus. Forgot their FIRST love!

Taj Mahal 1632 (Persian Shah built mausoleum for wife Mumtaz Mahal – *Jewel of the palace* died 14th child) 22yrs. 20k workers several countries = forgot why they were building this structure in first place and misplaced her coffin for years. They were distracted by details of bldg. & forgot **WHY** they were building this in first place. Could we become guilty of losing our first love?

“The Church that loses its love will soon lose its light, no matter how doctrinally sound it may be”

Community Group Discussions

1. Jesus begins by reminding the church that He “walks among the seven lampstands.” What does this reveal about His presence with His people, and how might that truth encourage us today?
2. The Ephesian church is commended for hard work, perseverance, and doctrinal discernment (vv. 2–3). Which of these strengths do you see most in our community, and which needs to be strengthened?
3. Jesus rebukes the Ephesian Church for forsaking their “first love” (v. 4). What do you think He means by “first love”? How can a church or believer drift from this love while still being active in good works?
4. Can you think of examples in your own life where you were busy for God but not abiding deeply in love for Him? How did you notice the difference?
5. Jesus calls them to “remember, repent, and do the works you did at first” (v. 5). What might that process look like for us practically, both as individuals and as a church?
6. What does it mean that if they do not repent, Jesus will “remove their lampstand” (v. 5)? How serious is this warning for churches today?
7. The Ephesians hated the practices of the Nicolaitans (v. 6). How can we stand against false teaching, ungodly practices, & unrestrained indulgence without losing love for Christ and others?
8. Verse 7 says, “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” How do we keep our hearts open to hearing from the Spirit rather than becoming hardened or distracted?
9. Jesus promises the one who conquers will eat from the tree of life (v. 7). How does this promise of eternal reward strengthen us to remain faithful now?
10. If Jesus wrote a letter to our church, the WELL, in the same style as this one, what might He commend us for, and what might He rebuke us for?