

## Revelation 2:1-7

### The Church at Ephesus

“You left your first love”

### Introduction

- Apart from the introduction (1:1-8) and conclusion (22:6-21), the Book of Revelation consists of four **Visions**
- In the **Vision** of Chapters 1-3, Jesus is shown to be the divine agent of the Sovereign Father in His majesty and sovereign authority.
- In **Chapter 2-3 Jesus** examines the 7 churches, giving praise and comfort where appropriate and giving correction and warning where it is needed.



### Rev 2:1-7: The Church at Ephesus

**Revelation 2:1** "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

<sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

### Rev 2:1-7: The Church at Ephesus

<sup>3</sup> "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

<sup>4</sup> "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

<sup>5</sup> "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.

### Rev 2:1-7: The Church at Ephesus

<sup>6</sup> "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

### Background about Ephesus

- Ephesus was a strategic city in Asia (Turkey), located at the mouth of a beautiful harbor where the Cayster River flowed into the Aegean Sea.
- Ephesus was the capital of proconsular Asia, one of the great religious, political, and commercial centers of its day.
- Ephesus was once considered the most important Greek city and the most important trading center in the Mediterranean region.

### Background about Ephesus

- When John wrote the Book of Revelation, the city of Ephesus probably boasted a population of somewhere between 100,00 to 250,000 people.
- Acts 18:19-21 tells about Paul's first brief visit to Ephesus when he preached in the Jewish synagogue.
- Not every Ephesian was open to Paul's Christian message.

### Background about Ephesus

- Chapter 19 in the Book of Acts tells of a riot started by a man named Demetrius. Demetrius made silver coins featuring the likeness of the Greek goddess Artemis (Diana to the Romans).
- Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus was worshipped as a fertility goddess.

### Background about Ephesus

- Acts 18:24 tells us that after Paul's brief visit, Apollos came and preached for a short period of time what he had learned from John the baptizer.
- Acts 18:26 tells us that Aquilla & Pricilla privately taught Apollos about Jesus.
- Acts 19:1 says Paul returned to Ephesus and 19:8 tells us he preached in the Jewish synagogues for 3 months.

### Background about Ephesus

- There was a negative reaction among some of the Jews so Paul withdrew from the synagogues and moved his teaching location to the hall of Tyrannus.
- He stayed there for 2 years preaching and evangelizing.
- Acts 19:10 tells us "all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."
- Acts 19:11 tells us that God did many special miracles through Paul at Ephesus.

### Background about Ephesus

- When Paul left Ephesus to continue his missionary endeavors, he placed Timothy and Erastus in the leadership at the Church (1 Timothy 1:3).
- The following show ruins of the Celsus library in ancient Ephesus – completed about 135 A.D.
- Once the location of 12,000 scrolls, the library is a Roman structure that was built to honor the Senator Tiberius Julius Celsus Polemaeanus, whose remains are said to be located in a crypt beneath the library's ground floor.



### Explanation of Revelation 2:1-7

• **Jesus examines the Church at Ephesus and says by way of praise and commendation:**

<sup>2</sup> "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

- **"your works"** – **"your labor"** - "strenuous labor that induces weariness"
- **"your patience"** – perseverance – didn't give up
- They worked faithfully for the Lord.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- **"you cannot bear those who are evil"** -
- **"you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars"** – they were zealous for the truth.
- They took seriously Paul's warning when he finally left his pastoral oversight of the Church of Ephesus:

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

**Acts 20:28** "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

<sup>29</sup> "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

<sup>30</sup> "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- they had ejected evildoers from their church, and they had tested and rejected some false apostles.
- <sup>3</sup> "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.
- **"you have persevered and have patience"** – you have patiently suffered and not given up. They were dependable.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

<sup>6</sup> "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

- The Nicolaitans were a sect that apparently taught that Christians could engage in immoral behavior without it affecting their relationship with God.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- They taught that what the Bible teaches about sexual relationships was not binding at all times.
- They said there could be exceptions to God's prohibition.
- This is similar to what is occurring in churches across America. They are saying that homosexual behavior can be blessed by God.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

• **Jesus examines the Church at Ephesus and says by way of rebuke, and with a desire that they fix what is wrong:**

<sup>4</sup> "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.

- **"your first love"** – characterized by intense gratitude and commitment to Jesus for forgiving your sins and making you a child of God.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- **"first love"** – changes your priorities. Our first priority is to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself and to do God's will.
- Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15).
- Jesus also said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- **“you left your first love”** – not lost, but “left.” Other things began to take a higher priority.
- Years of battling for a pure faith has evidently caused some of them to allow either the “work” of the Lord or other good things to cause them to neglect the most important thing: keeping Jesus first in everything every day.
- When you don’t keep Jesus first, it becomes easy to be irritated more and more by other people who annoy you.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

- A cooling of personal love and devotion for God inevitably results in the loss of harmonious relationships with others – in marriage, family, at work, at church, etc.
- From watching your life and listening to your words, how much importance would people who know you best believe you put upon your relationship with Jesus?
- Would they think it was the most important thing in your life?

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

• **Jesus gives the steps to take to remedy this situation.**

<sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.

- **“First love”** can be restored if we follow the instructions Christ gives.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

• **Jesus gives the steps to take to remedy this situation.**

- **“remember”** – think back to when first saved.
- **“repent”** – a radical redirection of one’s priorities.
- **“return”** – “to the gratitude and commitment you once had to your relationship with Jesus.
- **“or else”** - they would cease to be a church.
- **“unless you repent”** – repeated for emphasis.

### Revelation 2:1-7: Explanation

• **Closing words of exhortation with a promise:**

<sup>7</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

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