



The Church of "Ephesus"

"THE LOVELESS CHURCH"

January 28, 2019

REVELATION 2:1-7 NKJV – (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: (2) “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; (3) and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. (4) Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. (5) 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. (6) But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. (7) “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.” ’

To understand Ephesus, all you have to do is understand New York. Ephesus was the New York of Asia Minor, now known as Turkey. Ephesus was the center of commerce, of culture, of civic focus, of fashion. If you wanted to go on vacation, Ephesus was the place to go. It was a tourist city. It was well known throughout Asia as the place to go. It was an economic boomtown. It was like a Wall Street.

It dealt in significant financial matters because of its strategic location. It was also known for idolatry. The church at Ephesus where you get the book of Ephesians out of, that’s the book written to the church at Ephesus.

The story of the church's beginning--feel free to read it sometime-- is **Acts 19** of how in the midst of sorcery and witchcraft and economics, people got saved and the church was established and it is expressed to us in **Acts 19** about the energy, excitement, and challenges that faced this brand-new church.

But here in the book of Revelation, he is not writing because all is well. He is writing because of a situation that needed to be addressed for people who wanted to be overcomers, as I hope that we do.

Jesus affirms the Ephesians’ **positive actions**: “I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary” (**Revelation 2:2-3**). The Ephesian church was a hard-working group of believers full of fortitude. Also to their credit, they were gate-keepers of the truth and did not compromise with evildoers, and they showed patient endurance in bearing up under hardship.

Jesus adds another commendation concerning doctrinal purity: “But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (**Revelation 2:6**). We don’t know much about the Nicolaitans and their doctrine, except that it was heretical. Many are experiencing the same today. Being entertained instead of taught, always claiming to be the victims (no responsibility), and trying to impress or win over their congregations instead of worshipping God as instructed (selfishness).

However, Jesus also notes their shortcoming: “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love” (**Revelation 2:4**). They were hard working, but they no longer had the same passion for Christ as when they first believed. **Their work was no longer motivated by love**. But instead, competition, division and deceitfulness. Jesus called the Ephesians to repent: “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first” (**Revelation 2:5**).

Like the Ephesian church, we can easily fall prey to a cold, mechanical observance of religion. Like the Ephesians, many tend to focus solely on doctrinal purity and hard work, to the exclusion of true love for Christ. As this letter shows, no amount of zeal for the truth or moral correctness can replace a heart full of love for Jesus. Love can’t be limited and let us not brag on our work, for God knows the pureness of the heart and our thoughts are not His thoughts. One must have knowledge, understanding (how God meant it) and application of God’s word! There is no exception!

SCRIPTURE READING: EPHESIANS 2:8

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: To love someone is to make a self-evaluation and say to yourself, “Would Jesus be pleased?”