

Revelation Chapter 2

Ephesus was the most important seaport city of Asia Minor in the Roman Empire. It hosted the famous temple of Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Paul labored in this city for three years.

“Ephesus may be addressed first because it played a leading role in the beginning of the Christian church in the Gentile world (it was the center of the Pauline mission and later the residence of John). It also had geographical priority since it was the best port of entry into that part of Asia Minor (e.g., Roman governors going to other regions in the area would embark there).”¹

Revelation 2:1-7. The Church of Ephesus - **The Loveless Church**.

2 “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:

“To the angel(*angelos*) of the church of Ephesus”= Messenger or pastor. The context would appear to indicate the pastor/elder of the church.

“Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” = Churches.

Jesus walked in the midst of the churches indicating his living presence among the churches.

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.

Jesus began his address to the Ephesian Church by commending their faithfulness in maintaining doctrinal purity and ousting those who proved to be false teachers. They especially disdained the heretical group known as the Nicolaitans.

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

¹ Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999. Print. New International Greek Testament Commentary.

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.”²

After commending the Ephesian Christians, Jesus then issued a stinging rebuke. “You have left your first love.” How could a church that was so intent of maintaining doctrinal/biblical purity, testing teachers, laboring tirelessly, and bearing up under persecution lose their love for Jesus?

G. K. Beale in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* offered:

The Ephesian Christians were not diligent in witnessing to the same faith in the outside world . . . The idea is that they no longer expressed their former zealous love for Jesus *by witnessing to him in the world*.³

Christ desires that we maintain doctrinal purity, avoiding compromise with the world and sin, but we must not lose our love for Him. The motives by which we serve Him should be out of sincere love for Him. We must not lose our zeal to bear witness of Jesus’ love to the outside world.

In one sense this letter demonstrates the danger of becoming inwardly focused as a church. When the church loses its zeal to be outward focused, it loses its power.

Revelation 2: 8-11. The Church of Smyrna – **The Faithful and Persecuted Church.**

⁸“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”⁴

Smyrna was one of the two churches that did not receive a reprimand from Christ. They remained faithful to Christ despite severe persecution. Christ had only praise and encouragement for them.

Jesus refers to himself as “the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.” This simply demonstrates Christ’s prominence and power.

² *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982. Print.

³ Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999. Print. *New International Greek Testament Commentary*.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982. Print.

The church at Smyrna was economically poor, and as verse 10 indicates, things were about to get worse, but Jesus commends the Christians at this church for their faithfulness amid persecution and hardship. Although poor by the world's standards, they were rich by God's standards.

Jesus promised them "the crown of life" for remaining faithful. Does this teach salvation by works as some claim it does? What does Jesus mean by the statement "He who endures to the end will be saved?"

Question: What is the purpose of trials?

Answer: To prove the legitimacy of one's proclamation. Thus, those who were truly children of God would endure the trials of life, the testing of persecution at the hands of the Jewish haters of Christianity and the Roman imprisonment. Those who are truly born again will endure by God's grace the tests which try their faith.

God has promised to never leave or forsake us, although we will suffer persecution for Christ's sake, if indeed we are his, but it is He who keeps us by His Spirit and by His grace. So Jesus was not teaching a works salvation here as has unfortunately been preached by some.

As believers, we should remain faithful to the principles and truths of God's word in the face of ridicule. Compromise should never be our choice.

Revelation 2:12-17. The Church of Pergamos (Pergamum) – The Compromising Church.

Pergamos had been faithful to a point but began to tolerate those who were bringing sin into the church through the practice of sexual immorality and idol worship. This was the sin of Balaam. See Numbers 22-25; 31:15-16.

Christ's bride is to be pure and holy. There is no room for compromise in the body of Christ. Compromise will always bring spiritual, and sometimes physical, illness and problems into the church. A church that willfully permits open sin among its members has compromised the teachings of God's Word.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and condemned them for allowing a stepson to sleep with his stepmother. (I Cor. 5:1-5).

The Doctrine of Balaam was that mindset of compromising the Truths of God by causing the People of God to sin. Fulfilling one's sexual desires and permitting the unholy to have a place in the church or our lives is what Christ hated.

The Doctrine of Nicolaitans was the heresy that was creeping into the early church that taught the flesh is unimportant to God, since God is only concerned with the spirit of mankind. Thus one was free to indulge their fleshly desires to the max with no consequences to be concerned about.

The church at Pergamos was called upon to repent. Christ always calls his people to repentance. God wants his people to be spiritually whole and He is long suffering, yet there are consequences for those who stiffen their necks and harden their hearts.

The hidden manna represents Christ. Just as manna in the wilderness sustained the Israelites, Christ is that eternal bread that shall provide eternal nourishment. Christ is the bread of Life.

Revelation 2:18-29. The Church of Thyatira. **The Sinning Church.**

The Church at Thyatira had some good qualities. Note they were busy. Their work was motivated by love, unlike the Church at Ephesus, and they were being patient in the face of hardship. So one could rightly say that this church had some good things going on.

The Church, however, was permitting outright adulteration of the Teachings and Truths of God's Word.

Jezebel was a false prophetess. She undoubtedly was greatly influencing the church with her false teachings.

Christ gave her time to repent but she did not, thus judgment was coming. Christ always gives his people time to repent and is long suffering but unrepented sin will always be judged. It must be in order for God to remain true to His Nature and Character. God never winks at sin. We may prefer to think that somehow or another God will let things slide but there is always a day of reckoning. God prefers that his people repent and turn away from their sin, but refusal to do so, will always be met with His Just Judgment.

"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" I Peter 4:17

Jezebel represents or symbolizes the adulteration of the holy. In the Old Testament account of Jezebel and Ahab, Jezebel deliberately and joyously brought her pagan gods into the worship of the Israelites. She set a snare for the people of God by introducing her pagan deities among the Israelites, thus they departed from worshipping the One True God.

Not all members of the church at Thyatira had compromised their faith. (Verse 24).

The church at Thyatira ceased to exist by the end of the Second Century A.D.