

The Seven Churches

Part 1. Ephesus

Revelation 1 NIV

9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. **10** On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, **11** which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. **14** The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. **15** His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. **16** In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. **20** The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

Revelation 2 NIV

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. **3** You have

persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. **6** But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The Letter to the Church in Ephesus starts out

Vs. 1 “To the Angel of the Church of Ephesus write:”

- The Lord himself says, send this message to the Angel of the Church; angelos: messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God.

More times than not this Greek word is translated Angel, but it can also be translated Messenger.

The Church of Ephesus had an appointed Angel; an appointed messenger. The instruction of the Lord was to them and for the Church as a whole.

Ephesus was a famous city in the ancient world, with an equally famous church.

- Ephesus was the city where Paul ministered for three years.
- It was the city where Aquilla and Priscilla, with Apollos ministered.
- It was the city where Paul's close associate Timothy ministered.
- According to strong church historical traditions, the Apostle John himself ministered there.

Vs. 1b “These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”

Seven Stars = Seven Angels

Seven Golden Lampstands = Seven Churches

What a picture of Jesus:

He is the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven Churches mentioned here.

He walks among the Seven Churches...

Can you visualize this happening...

This is a picture of a Master walking through looking intently...

He is doing inspections...

He is looking at every detail...

He is interested in every part...

He is fully invested in the business of his Church...

He is with every ounce of his being giving it his full attention...

And it happens in such a way that everyone is unaware...

Then at the end of his careful inspection He stands and He says these words of affirmation to the Church of Ephesus...

Vs. 2,3 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. **3** You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Notice what Jesus affirms here:

- I know your deeds...
- Your Hard Work and Persevere...
- You Cannot tolerate wicked people...
- You have Tested those who claim to be apostles buy are not...
- You have Persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary...

I know your deeds.

Jesus looks at His church, and He knows what is going on. It is no mystery to Him. There may be sin or corruption hidden in a congregation, but it isn't hidden to Jesus. He would say the same thing to us today, both as individuals and as a congregation:

The things Jesus Commends reminds me of Scripture:

Colossians 3:23,24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, **24** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

1 Thessalonians 5

20 Do not despise prophecies, **21** but test everything; hold fast what is good. **22** Abstain from every form of evil.

James 1:2-4

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

The Church in Ephesus have done these things well...

- They have Worked Hard and Persevered...
- They do not tolerate wickedness...
- They have Tested those who claim to be apostles but are not...
- They have Persevered and have endured hardships for His name, and have not grown weary...

But the Lord is not done there...

- This is where Jesus could have prefaced the Second Part of his address to Ephesus; I know your Heart...

Vs. 4 "Yet I hold this against you. You have **forsaken the love you had at first.**"

Vs. 4 NKJV "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have **left your first love.**"

5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

NKJV - "Nevertheless I have this against you."

Nevertheless means "despite all that."

Nevertheless means all the *good* they did, does not cancel out the *bad*.

There is something seriously wrong. They have **forsaken / left** - not *lost* - their **first love**.

The distinction between *forsaking* and *losing* is important. Something can be lost by accident, but leaving-*forsaking* is a deliberate act.

- Though they had forsaken their first love, *everything looked great on the outside*.
- If you would have attended a church service at Ephesus, you might have thought, "This is a happening church.
- They are doing so much, their Children's programs are well organized... They have so many volunteers...
- They have 3 rotating Worship Teams...
- They have greater and Ushers at every entrance and even in the parking lot...
- And they really guard the truth...
- On the outside the mechanics of the Church were good...
- But the Lord saw there was a problem...
- Their hearts had wandered away from Him...

Vs. 5 Consider (**Remember**) how far you have fallen! **Repent** and **do the things you did at first**. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

- The first step in restoration for the Ephesian church is for them to **Remember**.
- They need to **remember how far they have fallen**.

- This means remembering *where they used to be in love with the Lord and one another*.

In Luke 16, When the Prodigal Son was in the pig pen, the first step in restoration was remembering what life was like back in his father's house. This is always the first step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord.

Repent: This is *not* a command to feel sorry, or really to *feel* anything. It means to change your direction, to go a different way. It is an "urgent appeal for instant change of attitude and conduct, before it is too late."

Do the first works: This means that they must go back to the basics, to the very first things they did when you first fell in love with Jesus. These are the things that we never grow beyond.

What are **the first works**?

- Remember how you used to spend time in His Word?
- Remember how you used to pray?
- Remember the joy you had in going to Church and being together with other Christians?
- Remember how excited you were to tell others about Jesus?

Vs. 5b If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

Jesus gives them a stern warning. Unless they repent, He will remove *their light* and *His presence*. When their **lampstand** is removed, they may continue as an organization, but no longer as a true church of Jesus Christ.

Closing:

Evaluation of our hearts is a continual part of our Christian Walk...

2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"

Repentance is apart of our Christian Walk...

Change is a foundational part of being a Christian...

Repent means Change.

When we become believers in Christ he calls us to Repent and Believe.

It doesn't stop on the day we believe.

We live a life of Repentance.

This says to God I'm not in charge you are.

I will follow You.

For us to stay were we need to be with God

We must examine our Deeds.

We must examine our Hearts.

We must practice ongoing (Change) Repentance.