

THE BOOK OF REVELATION 15

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

Review: The Book is divided into three sections. (Rev. 1:19 NKJV) ¹⁹*"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.*

A. **Section 1:** "The things which you have seen" refer to the vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 1.

1. John had just seen this vision.

B. **Section 2:** "The things which are" refer to the things of this present church age...the things which are.

1. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with instructions for this present church age.

2. After chapter 3, the church is always seen in heaven.

C. **Section 3:** "The things which will take place after this" refer to future events which will take place after the church age, or after the church caught up to heaven (raptured).

1. Chapters 4-22 deal with future events.

2. The seven year period between the Rapture of the church and the Second Coming of Christ, sometimes referred to as Daniel's 70th week, or the Tribulation Period is covered in chapters 4-19.

3. The 1,000 year reign of Christ is covered in chapter 20.

4. The New Heavens and Earth are covered in chapters 21 and 22.

5. None of the events of chapters 4-22 have been fulfilled, but they are at the door.

I. Text (Rev. 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; 3and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5Remember 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. 6But 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."

A. Each letter begins with this phrase, "I know your works" Jesus is omniscient...all knowing. He knows our works...our labors of faith in the gospel. Every local church is to be laboring in faith for the sake of the gospel.

II. What He commended them for:

A. Labored with patience (perseverance) (v.2). this is a quality Jesus commended them for. They labored in the gospel ministry with perseverance. They didn't give up. They kept on going.

1. *(1 Cor. 15:58 NKJV) 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

2. We need to find the work of the Lord He wants us involved in and be steadfast, immovable in it, and abound in it. Let's examine ourselves:

3. Am I involved in some aspect of the work of the Lord (that would include the helps ministry)?

4. If so, am I laboring with patience?

B. They could not bear (endure) those who are evil (v.2) It means they would not allow or put up with those people who came into their fellowship and insisted on living evil, immoral lives. They would confront evil. They insisted that those who came into fellowship and claimed to be Christians should live a holy life. It means that they withdrew fellowship from those who claimed to be Christians, yet continued on living evil, immoral lives.

1. *(1 Cor. 5:9-12 NKJV) 9I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-not even to eat with such a person. 12For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person.*

2. This is the New Testament policy for those who claim to be Christians, but refuse to repent.

3. Rather than allowing their ministers and membership to be sexually immoral, churches and denominations should put away from themselves the evil person.

4. Otherwise, the whole church will be corrupted. (1 Cor. 5:6-8 NKJV) *6Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. 8Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

C. They had tested those who claimed to be apostles and found them to be liars. (v.2)

1. Evidently, certain false ministers came to them claiming to be apostles, seeking an avenue to minister to them.

2. But evidently, they observed their fruits, judged them as false ministries, and rejected them. (Matt. 7:15-20 NKJV) *15"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

3. Don't just accept anyone who walks through the door and says they are called of God to minister to you. That's why we like to get to know people, watch their attitudes and lifestyles before we let them teach or preach or have a position of leadership in the church.

4. This is really a commendation to the pastor. The pastor is the shepherd of the flock. He is there to lead, feed, guard, and guide the flock. He is there to guard the flock from wolves. Wolves seek to gain avenues to the sheep to devour them. Any so called minister that comes into a church and does not recognize and yield to the pastor as the chief elder and messenger of the flock is seeking to separate the disciples to himself to take advantage of them. At Ephesus, they had learned not to allow this.

D. They persevered and had patience, and labored for His name's sake and did not become weary. (v.3)

1. They were not lazy people. They were hard workers for the Lord. (Gal. 6:9 NKJV) *9And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

2. Let us labor in the Lord and not grow weary.

E. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. (v.6).

1. Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolaus, a heretic (false teacher). They were a sect of gnostics. (Gnosticism was a philosophical and religious system teaching that knowledge rather than faith is the key to salvation. It denied the Deity and redemptive sufferings of Christ, and taught impure and immoral doctrines such as the community of wives, that committing adultery and fornication was not sinful, and that eating meats sacrificed to idols was lawful).

2. Jesus hates these things and we should to.

3. If we are going to follow Jesus, we must learn to love what He loves and hate what He hates. (Psalm 119:127,128 NKJV) *127Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold! 128Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way.*

III. What He corrected them for:

A. They had left their first love (v.4)

1. They didn't love Him like they did at the first. (WNT) *Yet I have this against you--that you no longer love Me as you did at first.*

2. They did not thrill over Him like they did at the first.

3. They did not want to spend time with Him like they did at the first.

4. Their affections for Him had cooled down.

5. It appears they had put the work of the Lord over the Lord of the work!

B. He commanded them to do two things (v.5)

1. Remember from where you have fallen. (WNT) *Be mindful, therefore, of the height from which you have fallen.*

2. Repent (always a condition for revival) and do the first works Change your mind about the matter and renew your first love in Jesus. Spend time with Him in prayer and the Word.

3. He gave them a warning if they did not repent. Unless they repented as a church on this one point, He would remove their lampstand from its place. That means their church would be judged and removed from its position of ministry and influence in that region. The lampstand would no longer give its light. you see, if they continued to lose their love, soon their works would fail and they would go back into sin and perish.

4. If we are going to be used by God in revival in this region, then we must renew and maintain our first love for Jesus as individuals and as a church. Jesus must come first and above all else in our lives.

C. He gave them a promise if they would overcome (v.7).

1. What is an overcomer?

a. (1 John 5:4,5 NKJV) *4For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. 5Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

b. (1 John 5:13 NKJV) *13These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

c. (1 Tim. 4:1 NKJV) *1Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,*

d. An overcomer is one who has been born of God through faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and who continues to believe in the name of the Son of God.

e. If we will adhere to our first love in Jesus, we will never have to be concerned about departing from the faith, and we will receive the rewards of an overcomer.

f. Only overcomers will eat from the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God in heaven.

g. Those who do not overcome, but backslide and depart from the faith will not have access to the Paradise of God in heaven.

IV. (v.7) The Spirit wants all of the churches to hear and understand these things.

A. Notice, the Spirit of God not only speaks to believers individually, but He speaks to churches corporately.