

**STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF JESUS**  
**JESUS LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS**

Read Revelation 2:1-7

### **Introduction**

The letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 share a similar structure. They each feature:

- An address to a particular congregation
- An introduction of Jesus
- A statement regarding the condition of the church
- A verdict from Jesus regarding the condition of the church
- A command from Jesus to the church
- A general exhortation to all Christians
- A promise of reward

We can see the state of each of these seven churches – and the state of our own walk with Jesus – by looking at what Jesus has to say to each church, and we are supposed to learn from it. Each letter concludes with the phrase: *“He who has an ear, let him hear and heed what the Spirit says to the churches (AMP)”*

It should be noted that each message with its warning or counsel or comfort begins by calling attention to some aspect of the majesty and glory of Christ as to His person and work as it is revealed in the vision of chapter one. It should be noted that Jesus Christ perfectly meets our need and is the source of our strength. All the problems and needs of the church are met in Jesus Christ. He and He alone is the ANSWER to our needs and the SOLUTION to our problems.

### **Ephesus**

This was a famous city in the ancient world (Ephesus is located near the western shores of modern-day Turkey) and was also world-famous as a religious, cultural, and economic centre of the region. Ephesus had the notable temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with immoral sex. It had a famous church where Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years (Acts 19:1, Acts 10, Acts 20:31). Aquilla and Priscilla, with Apollos served there (Acts 18:24-28). Paul’s close associate Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3) and son in the ministry also worked in Ephesus.

### **Angel**

The pastors of those churches (Greek angelos, messengers)

### **Jesus Introduces Himself**

*“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’ (v1)*

**“The One who holds the seven stars.”** This is a note of warning and comfort. It stresses Christ’s authority and provision for the messengers of the local churches who have the responsibility to lead and teach God’s Word. But this also stresses the messenger’s need to be both submissive to and dependent upon his Lord for all that is needed for his ministry.

## The Approval (vv2-3)

**I know your works:** Jesus looked at His church, and He knew its condition. It was 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: I know your works.

**Your works, your labour, your patience:** Jesus knew what this church did right. They worked hard for the Lord, and they had godly endurance. Patience is the great ancient Greek word “hupomone”, which means “steadfast endurance.” In this sense, the church in Ephesus was rock-solid. Despite the idol worship and immorality in Ephesus, this church was rock-solid in their labour, patience, and their works.

**You cannot bear those who are evil:** The Ephesian church pursued doctrinal purity. Paul warned the Ephesians in Acts 20:29-31 about the wolves that would come among them and from this commendation of Jesus, we know that the Ephesians took Paul's warning seriously.

*“I know that after I am gone, [false teachers like] ferocious wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; even from among your own selves, men will arise, speaking perverse and distorted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves [as their followers]. Therefore, be continually alert, remembering that for three years, night or day, I did not stop admonishing and advising each one [of you] with tears.” (AMP)*

The church today, like the Ephesian church then, must vigorously test those who claim to be messengers from God – especially those who say they are apostles. How would you test these people? What tools do we have to test these messengers of deception?

**You have persevered and have patience and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary:** Also, the Ephesian church continued doing these things without becoming weary. They showed a godly perseverance that we should imitate. By all outward appearances, this was a solid church that worked hard, had great outreach, and protected the integrity of the gospel.

We see Paul admonishing Timothy along the same lines:

*“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:10-15)*

## Where They Fell Short

*“But I have this [charge] against you, that you have left your first love [you have lost the depth of love that you first had for Me].” (v4 AMP)*

*“But I have this against you: you have abandoned the passionate love you had for me at the beginning.” (v4 TPT)*

*“But you walked away from your first love—why? What's going on with you, anyway? Do you have any idea how far you've fallen? A Lucifer fall! “Turn back! Recover your dear early love. No time to waste, for I'm well on my way to removing your light from the golden circle.” (MSG)*

Jesus used a sobering word – nevertheless, which means “despite all that.” Jesus took into full account all the good in the Ephesian church, yet despite all that, He had something against them. They have left

– not lost – their first love. They once had a love that they don't have anymore. This can be described as “a definite and sad departure.”

The distinction between leaving and losing is important. Something can be lost quite by accident, but leaving is a deliberate act, though it may not happen suddenly. As well, when we lose something, we don't know where to find it; but when we leave something, we know where to find it. The problem was serious. Without love, all is vain. No wonder Jesus said, “Nevertheless I have this against you.” “A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love for Jesus within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Lose love, lose all.

**What love did they leave?** As Christians, we are told to love God and to love one another. Did they leave their love for God? Did they leave their love for one another? Probably both are in mind, because the two loves go together. You can't say you love God and not love His family, and you can't really love His family without loving Him first.

**First love:** There is a definite, sure difference in their relationship with Jesus. Things aren't as they used to be. It isn't that we expect that we should have the exact same excitement we had when everything was brand new in the Christian life, but the newness should transition into a depth that makes the first love even stronger.

### Jesus' Counsel to the Church

*“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.” (vv5-6)*

Jesus' counsel for restoration is in this order:

1. **Remember therefore from where you have fallen:** The first step in restoration for the Ephesian church is for them to remember. They need to remember from where you have fallen. This means remembering where they used to be in their love for the Lord and for one another.

When the Prodigal Son was in the pigpen, the first step in restoration was remembering what life was like back in his father's home (Luke 15:17-19). This is always the first step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord.

2. **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.
3. **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 in getting together with other Christians?
- Remember how excited you were about telling others about Jesus?

### Consequence

**Or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place:** Jesus gave them a stern warning. Unless they repent, He will remove their light and His presence. When their lampstand is

removed, they could continue as an organization, but no longer as a true church of Jesus Christ. It would be the church of Ichabod, where the glory had departed (1 Samuel 4:21).

### **Another Encouragement to the Church in Ephesus**

***But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate:*** Jesus – probably so the Ephesians would not be overly discouraged – gave this church another compliment. They were complimented because they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

### **Who were the Nicolaitans and what were their deeds?**

“The Nicolaitanes are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained as deacons by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. They are those who today, we call “hyper-grace” believers. They are those who believe that “once saved; forever saved” irrespective of your actions, words, and fellowship.

### **Conclusion of Jesus’ Letter to the Church in Ephesus**

*“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.” (v7)*

***He who has an ear:*** This qualifies everyone – or at least everyone who will listen. This letter was not only written to the church at Ephesus in the Apostle John’s Day. It is written to us, and to all Christians throughout the centuries.

***Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches:*** Each one of these seven letters apply to all churches. We must hear what the Spirit says to the churches – not just to one church. These letters – each of them – were meant to speak to you, if you will only have an ear to hear what the Spirit says.

***To him who overcomes:*** Jesus made this promise to him who overcomes – but what does this overcomer overcome? We usually think of overcoming in dramatic terms of overcoming sin and in spiritual warfare, but here Jesus seems to speak of overcoming of their coldness of heart and lack of love marked by leaving their first love.

***I will give to eat from the tree of life:*** The promise for these overcomers was a return to Eden, a restoration, and eternal life. This was meant first in the eternal sense of making it to heaven, which was no small promise to a church threatened with the removal of Jesus’ presence. It is also meant in the sense of seeing the effects of the curse rolled back in our own lives though walking in Jesus’ redeeming love.

