

Revelation Lesson 24  
Ephesus: The Lagging Church (Commendation) Part 1

Revelation 2:2 “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:”

Tonight's lesson was originally planned to a part of Lesson 23, but time got the better of me and so we now start with Jesus' commendation or compliment if you will to the Church of Ephesus.

**I know** – Here we start verse 2. Now when the One minute Manager book series was written, it seems to me they took notes from Jesus. I say that because if there is something “good” or “praiseworthy” about each Church Jesus mentions it first – hence the word “commendation” in our title. Now, the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, to me, is proof enough that He knows. The word here has two meanings depending on the context. One meaning is “to see” the other is “to know” and thus this context implies not merely that he “sees” (this is how Eugene Peterson put it in *The Message*) but rather the KJB translators were absolutely correct in rendering this word as “know” due to the context further down. Think about this, if you denote ONLY that Christ “saw” then that would not allow Him access as the Omniscient One – The All-Knowing One. To merely allow Him to see would merely relegate Him to His Omnipresent (Everywhere at Once) Status. This shows that He KNOWS what they are THINKING. What they are doing, why they are doing what they are doing! He has inherent knowledge. RABBIT TRAIL – This is why I do not like Santa Claus - “He sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake....”

**thy works,** - McGee rightly states here: “*We need to understand that He is speaking to believers. The Lord Jesus does not ask the lost world for good works.*” As a matter of fact recall Titus 3:5 “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” I often refer back to Matthew 7:21-23 to show that if EVER there was a moment to be SAVED BY WORKS that would be it (BTW, that scene shows the Great White Throne Judgment Revelation 20:11-15) but we see NONE are saved by their works. Also, for those who are Church workaholics, please understand that all work is not necessarily well pleasing in the sight of God look at the case of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42).

**and** – Even though they are both joined by the connector or bridge “AND” the implication here is that there are a few items Jesus states that He knows about.

**thy labour,** - Many think work and labour mean the same thing. So, the word *labor* carries a meaning of working under weariness. In the Gospel of John Chapter 4:1 it says that Jesus became wearied with His journey. That was the weariness which Ephesian believers experienced. They suffered weariness in their labors for Him while upon their pilgrim journey.

**and thy patience,** - The wording “**THY PATIENCE**” indicates that the patience belongs to someone. In this case it is THE CHURCH'S Patience. For them to have patience (which means to endure) then they MUST have endured Tribulations. Note Romans 5:3-5 “*And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*” Again, patience as used in the New Testament is (Waite tells us) “*characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials, and troubles, and sufferings.*” Indeed they were for the most part heeding Hebrews 12:1 “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*”

**and how thou canst not** – Again, as with the Patience, we find there is another “group” application. I find it interesting also that even though this is addressed to each “messenger” or pastor, the message of course is not to him, but for him to deliver to the flock, understanding this as such, I find it interesting that the Church is addressed by Christ as a single unity as is taught in Romans 12:5 “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

**bear** - This word means a burden or something heavy that is held up. But coupled with the previously seen negative “not” it means that the Church is NOT bearing.

**them which are evil:** - The “thing” the Church at Ephesus is NOT BEAR”ING” or upholding are “them which are evil.” If each of us decided on our own what “evil” is then NOBODY would be left at Church. But since they are praised by Christ we find they used the standard of God – His Word – to determine such and used such to protect the congregation. So what would be classified as “evil?” Well we would be here all night if we defined ALL the evils of the Bible. But suffice it to say that the Bible sees evil as starting when we do not seek the Lord and His way. See in 2 Chronicles 12:14 “And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.” So WHY did Rehoboam do evil? Because he prepared NOT HIS HEART TO SEEK THE LORD. There is the start of ALL EVIL. Furthermore, we are admonished to: Psalms 34:14 “Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” and Psalms 119:104 “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.” and finally in the “so-called” Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:13 “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

**and thou hast tried** – Here we find the Church at Ephesus “tried” some people. How? In a court? No. The Word tried means to: “Put to the test” or “to find the proof”

**them which say** – We see here that those who “were tried” are “them which say” thus their power was in their mouths (note the plurality here – them). In other words these folks said something. What did they say?

**they are apostles,** - “Them” said that “they” were apostles. How did the early church know? Well, I think (save for the evidence given to us in Revelation) that the Scriptures make it plain.

1. The office of Apostle was given by Christ.
  1. Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
2. The number of Apostles is given.
  1. Luke 6:13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;
  2. Revelation 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
3. The Apostle Paul states he was chosen to be an Apostle (many times)
  1. Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)
  2. We could find that evidence of Apostleship could somehow be demonstrated as stated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.
4. Finally since the office/gift of Apostleship was given by Christ alone, no man or board can make someone a TRUE apostle.
  1. Acts 1:16-17 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

2. Acts 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.
5. In conclusion I think that since the Bible states there are 12 APOSTLES. Then there are 12 APOSTLES. No more, no less. Furthermore, both Judas Iscariot and Matthias were NUMBERED with the Apostles. Paul IS AN APOSTLE – How? BY THE WILL OF GOD.

**and are not, and hast found them liars:** - Again, these Imposter Apostles were found, having been tried or tested to be FALSE APOSTLES. Just like many are today, and they are joined by False Teachers, Preachers, Messiahs, Prophets, etc.

Well, we have not reached the end of Jesus' Commendation of this lagging Church, we have gotten merely to the end of verse 2, so until next time, let us bow our heads in prayer!