

(68)

Revelation 2:1-7

If one were to leave the island of Patmos and travel some 38 to 40 miles northeast, one would come to the very place that was once the greatest city in Asia. Today the city is named “Efes” but in John’s day its name was Ephesus. Pergamum was the official capital of Asia, but all major roads of travel ran through Ephesus so Ephesus was called the “highway to Rome.”

Ephesus was one of the wealthiest cities in Asia. Robert Thomas said, that “Commercially, it was the largest city in the Roman province of Asia” (*Revelation 1-7*, p. 128). It was located on the Cayster River, about six miles from the Aegean Sea. It had art, commerce and religion. David Hocking writes: “The uncovered archaeological ruins of ancient Ephesus are amazing to behold. One of the first things that strikes the tourist is the size of the city. This was no small village but a major metropolitan area with perhaps as many as 500,000 inhabitants. The Roman amphitheater seats 25,000 people with an acoustical design that eliminates the need for microphones. ... The city was also known for its great library, rivaling those of Rome, Athens, Antioch of Syria, and Alexandria, Egypt. It was a cultural center and a place where once could find people from all over the world, representing every occupation, language, and belief” (*The Coming World Leader*, p. 43).

Ephesus featured a temple that was dedicated to the worship of a Greek goddess Artemis, which is also identified as the Roman goddess Diana (Acts 19:24, 27, 28, 34, 35), which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was 425 feet long, 220 feet wide, and it had 120 columns that were 60 feet high and each column had been donated by a king. People came from all over the world just to see this magnificent structure.

Ephesus was a very immoral city. In fact, it was one of the most immoral cities in all of Asia due, for the most part, to this temple. The temple was an official asylum for criminals. Any criminal who could get to this temple was considered safe. He was off-limits. William Barclay writes: “Besides being a centre of religion, the Temple of Artemis (Diana) was a centre of crime and immorality. The temple area possessed the right of asylum; any criminal was safe if he could reach it” (*The Revelation of John*, Vol. 1, p. 60).

The temple also employed hundreds of “priestesses” who were nothing more than “sacred prostitutes” for use in the religious ceremonial rites. In fact, Barclay said, “The temple possessed hundreds of priestesses who were sacred prostitutes” (*Ibid.*, p. 60). Artemis, or Diana, was an ugly fertility goddess. The actual image is grotesque. It is a “squat, black, many breasted figure that was reputed to have fallen from heaven” (Thomas, p. 129). Naturally because she was a supposed fertility goddess, the temple rites and rituals featured much immorality.

As a postscript, the ruins of the temple today are in a swamp. What once was a spectacular wonder of the world is nothing but a few ruins in a swamp. That is where false religion and immorality will lead - it will ruin you and you’ll be brought to nothing.

Ephesus had a great church and it began with the best Bible teachers of any church in the world. Seven of the most important believers in the world were associated with the Ephesian church and eight books of the Bible are linked to Ephesus:

- 1) The **Apostle Paul** stayed longer in Ephesus than anywhere else in his ministry (Acts 20:31). He stated and taught and ministered for three years. One of the most touching scenes of Paul's life is when he left Ephesus, because his teaching of God's Word (Acts 20:37-38).
- 2) **Timothy** was probably the first official pastor of the church of Ephesus, who had been handpicked and personally trained and taught by the Apostle Paul (I Timothy 1:3).
- 3) **Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos** stayed in Ephesus and **Apollos** was one of the greatest Biblical speakers and orators of his time (Acts 18:19, 24, 26). Aquila and Priscilla had been personally taught by Paul (Romans 16:3).
- 4) **Mary**, the mother of Jesus, is said to have been buried in Ephesus. Since there was a close affiliation between John and Mary, specifically authorized by Jesus Christ (John 19:26-27), it is very probable that this is true. It has been said that Mary's house was located six miles outside of Ephesus (Barclay, p. 60).
- 5) The **Apostle John** eventually went to Ephesus and became a great teacher and leader of the church. History says that he finished his ministry and life in Ephesus. In fact, Eusebius said John "sleeps in Ephesus" (*The History of the Church*, p. 141).
- 6) Nine books of the Bible may be linked to Ephesus - The **Gospel of John** was written in Ephesus; **Ephesians** was written to the church in Ephesus; **I and II Timothy** were written to Timothy who was in Ephesus; **I and II and III John** were written in Ephesus; **I Corinthians** was written by Paul while he was in Ephesus; and **Revelation** was first sent to Ephesus and is specifically addressed here.

One other interesting note is that Eusebius claims that one of the Apostle Philip's (Acts 1:13) daughters also lived and died in Ephesus. He cited a letter from Polycrates, who was pastor of the Ephesian church (A.D. 190), who said that one of Philip's daughter's "lived ... and rests in Ephesus" (*Ibid.*, p. 141).

This Ephesian church had a phenomenal Biblical history. It was like no other church in the entire world. **Jesus Christ specifically singles out this church of Ephesus first and there are ten points of communication that He presents:**

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #1 – Christ's address to the specific angel and church.
2:1a

One of the first grammatical points that hits your eye is that both the noun "angel" and the noun "church" have an article "the" (τω αγγελω; της εκκλησιας). What this syntactically means is that Jesus Christ is addressing a specific angel ("the angel") in a specific church ("the church in Ephesus"). He obviously knows every one of these angels and churches and He targets each one specifically.

As we already have stated, there have been different interpretations as to what is meant by the noun “angel” (αγγελος). Some have said it is used in reference to heavenly angelic beings and others have said that it is used in reference to earthly human beings.

When Jesus Christ uses the word He uses it in reference to both angelic and human beings (i.e. Matt. 11:10). **When we track the ways that Jesus Christ uses this word, the majority of instances refer to angelic beings.** In any use of the word, the context becomes a key determining factor.

We do know that there are real heavenly angels connected to the local church and we specifically know that when Timothy was pastoring the church in Ephesus, Paul reminded him of this reality (I Timothy 5:21). He charged him in the presence of His “chosen angels.” Since angels are not omnipresent, we may assume that specific angels were monitoring his ministry in Ephesus.

We also know from I Corinthians 11:10 that there are monitoring angels connected to a local church.

We also know from Hebrews 1:13-14 that angels are ministering spirits sent out by God to render ministry service to believers. Since the writer of Hebrews places a high priority on church life, as we wait for prophetic things to happen (i.e. Heb. 10:24-25), we may assume that there is a very real and very serious angelic ministry associated with the Church.

If a church is moving in a proper direction, many blessings of God could be experienced in harmony with these angels. If a church were not moving in a proper direction, those same angels could withhold blessings and actually bring about some very negative chastisements.

By virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ specifically singles out a specific angel and a specific church, we know that He considers His church to be a very sacred place and woe to any who would take Him or His church lightly.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #2 – Christ’s command for John to write to the specific church. **2:1b**

Jesus Christ specifically commands John to specifically write to this church. It is interesting that Jesus already told John to do this (1:19), but He will specifically single out each church and command it again. **If ever you want to see how important the written Word of God is to the church, it is in these chapters.**

Christ does not tell John to hold discipleship seminars or sing a bunch of praise songs or act out a play or have some special fellowship outing; He tells him to write. This final book of the Bible stresses the importance of the written Word of God to the Church.

Until a church takes the written Word seriously, even though it may be popular in this world with all kinds of people, it will not ever be popular with God.

By virtue of the repetitious command to “write” to each church, the church is to be a place where the written Word of God is carefully proclaimed and taught until the Church Age is over.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #3 – Christ’s identification of a specific feature concerning Himself. **2:1b**

The specific feature brought out about Jesus Christ for this church in Ephesus is that He is “the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand” and He is “the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands.” Two slight differences occur here from what is stated in 1:13 and 1:16.

In **Revelation 1:13**, Jesus Christ is in the “middle” of the lampstands and in **2:1** He is walking among them. In **1:16** He holds (εχω) seven stars in his hands and in **2:1** He holds (κρατω) them. **The difference in the two Greek words “hold” is this: Jesus Christ is saying that He possesses and holds tight to the church over which He is master and ruler.**

Combined, these two slight changes indicate His sovereign work and activity has intensified:

- 1) Jesus Christ has the heavenly leadership of the church in His hand. He rules it and holds tight to it and it is accountable to Him. He has absolute control over the messengers.
- 2) Jesus Christ is the One who keeps a very close eye on each church and He is continually moving among the churches. He is on constant vigil to determine what is happening in the church and what it is reflecting.

Now the present tense of the participle “walking” is one that means Christ continually walks among His churches. We know there are angels connected to the church and we know there are spiritual leaders connected to the church; but **the emphasis Christ makes here is that He, Himself, continually and personally moves among His churches.**

Christ regularly visits and monitors His churches. He watches the leadership and He watches the congregation. J. Vernon McGee said I believe Christ is still walking up and down in our day and He is still judging the church.

We may assume from this that whatever we do for or in the church or what we don’t do is on full display before Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ carefully watches and controls the leadership and He **carefully monitors everything that is taking place in the church.**

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #4 – Christ’s assessment of things positive in the church. **2:2-3**

The verb “I know” (οιδα) which begins **verse 2** is repeated seven times to seven churches (**2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15**). **The meaning of this word is that Jesus Christ has seen everything and therefore has a full perceptive knowledge as opposed to a partial progressive knowledge (γνωσκω).** This word means Christ has all knowledge and is not seeking to gain knowledge (Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 311). This word proves that Jesus Christ is cognizant of every detail of every church. **As Christ analyzed this church He saw eight positive realities:**

Positive Reality #1 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their deeds . **2:2a**

The Greek word “deeds” (τα εργα) is a word that is repeated in five of the seven churches: (Ephesus 2:2; Thyatira 2:19; Sardis 3:1; Philadelphia 3:8; Laodicea 3:15). The article “the” specifies the work to the church of Ephesus, the specific church-work of the people. In other words he is not discussing the fact that people worked hard on some personal project, He is specifying their church work.

The particular emphasis of this word seems to be on work that is taken seriously.

According to G. Abbott-Smith, this word was used of employment in the sense of undertaking a specific enterprise (*Ibid.*, pp. 178-179). What I understand this word to mean is that the people of this church were as serious about church as they were about a job or enterprise.

The people in this church took their church responsibilities seriously. They went to worship services and they were serious about church life. They had a good work ethic and Jesus Christ took notice of this; He had full knowledge of what everyone did.

We cannot help but see that Jesus Christ takes notice of who is working hard in His church. He sees those who are real serious and those who are not. Ephesus was a church filled with people who worked hard.

Positive Reality #2 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their toil . **2:2b**

The particular meaning of this word “toil” (το κοπον) is that many people in the church exerted themselves to the point of exhaustion and fatigue (*Ibid.*, pp. 253-254). The article before the noun “toil” specifies this to their church-toil. These were not lazy people. These were dedicated workers in the Church of God. They tackled projects and got things done even when tired and worn out. Jesus Christ says, “I have full knowledge of every bit of this.”

Jesus Christ personally takes note of the work and the effort behind it. Some are so nonchalant about church; they don’t even show up to most of the services. They do not regularly and consistently do much of anything. But those who are working hard may know that their work and labor is not going unnoticed by the Lord.

Positive Reality #3 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their perseverance . **2:2c**

The word “perseverance” (την υπομονην) refers to a patient endurance (*Ibid.*, p. 462). The article again specifies this to church perseverance. These were people who stayed with it and they persevered no matter what came their way. They were not quitters. No matter what hit this church the people stuck with it. They kept at it. They kept ministering. They persevered.

We live in a day of whiners and complainers and when things get tough they threaten to run and quit. Not in the church of Ephesus - they persevered. Jesus Christ took special note of that.

Positive Reality #4 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their purity . **2:2d**

This was a church that would not tolerate evil doctrine or evil people. The Greek word “endure” is the antithesis or opposite of patient endurance. When evil men or women arose in the church of Ephesus, they were swiftly silenced and were not tolerated. These people did not for one second fellowship with evil people.

The word “evil” (κακος) is one that refers to that which is evil in the sense of being bad and worthless in God’s estimation (Smith, p. 227). It is used to describe several different kinds of things:

- 1) It is used to describe moral evil (I Corinthians 10:6; 13:4; Colossians 3:5).
- 2) It is used to describe doctrinal evil (Acts 23:9; Philippians 3:2).
- 3) It is used to describe verbal evil:
 - A. The verbal evil of speaking against godly leadership (II Timothy 4:14; III John 10-11).
 - B. The verbal evil of speaking what is false (I Peter 3:9-10).

Jesus Christ praises this church because it was one that always was on the lookout for those who were evil. If they came to the church and were involved in moral or verbal evil, this church did not put up with them and they are commended for this.

The church that tolerates anyone doing or saying anything he wants, even if it is bad, will never be a church commended by Jesus Christ. One writer said there ought to be a sense of holiness in the church, but it sure isn’t in most churches today because most churches today will tolerate anything and anyone. A God-honoring church does not put up with evil in its midst.

Positive Reality #5 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their leadership judgments . **2:2e**

There were those who would drift into Ephesus every now and then who would claim they were apostles, who were false religious liars. The church of Ephesus was so doctrinally and dispensationally solid that it could question these men on doctrinal points and prove they were false. This church was able to “test” these men and prove them to be false in light of God’s Word. That word “test” (πειραζω) means they were able to try them in the sense of being able to prove something, such as in a trial or court of law (Smith, p. 351). Christ commended them for this.

Today, if one comes into the church and claims that they are an apostle, we immediately know he is false for he cannot even meet one of the Biblical criteria for being an apostle:

- 1) An apostle had to be specifically verbally called by Jesus Christ. Matthew 4:18-22; Acts 9:15
- 2) An apostle had to receive specific teaching directly from Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12
- 3) An apostle had to physically see the resurrected Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 9:1-2; 15:7-8
- 4) An apostle had to make an apostolic impact on people in teaching the Word. I Cor. 9:1-2
- 5) An apostle had to be able to perform apostolic sign gift miracles. II Corinthians 12:11-12

About 30-35 years prior to Revelation, the Apostle Paul had specifically corralled the elders of the church of Ephesus and charged them to be on the lookout for false wolves who would try to creep into the church from without and within to destroy the flock (Acts 20:17, 28-31). In that context he repeated the fact that he had taught them the whole counsel of God. This meant that he would have taught them the importance of Israel and of the importance of the Age of Grace (Acts 20:20, 24, 25, 27, 32).

Jesus Christ had kept track of how this church at Ephesus protected Pauline teaching. When Revelation was written some 30-35 years later, the people of this church were still able to flush out heretics who claimed they were apostles.

We will discuss this further, but one thing we do see from this is the importance of accurately understanding God's Word and sound doctrine. The people in this church could spot phonies because they knew God's Word.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that he believed the need to test men today in the church is greater than when John wrote Revelation (*Revelation*, Thru the Bible, Vol. 5, p. 901). The church should be checking with musicians, evangelists, missionaries or any who come in presenting themselves as some "leader" for God. We need to put them to the test and find out if they are true.

It becomes very apparent from this that Jesus Christ pays close attention to whether or not the church truly stands for the truth of the Word. He commended the church of Ephesus for its ability to spot and silence those who were false.

Positive Reality #6 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their perseverance . **2:3a**

This is the same word (υπομονην) used in **verse 2**, but there are two differences. First there is no article "the" before the noun perseverance, which means that this became the character and quality of this church. Second, the context for the praise is different. In **verse two** the praise is for not quitting in service, whereas, in **verse 3** the praise is for not quitting when suffering.

This church was a church that faced its share of troubles and trials. The people of this church were not quitters; they stayed and Christ honors them. Even when they were hurting or suffering they would not quit. That perseverance was fully seen and known and commended by Jesus Christ.

Positive Reality #7 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of the reason for their endurance . **2:3b**

The believers in this church were praised by Jesus Christ because they endured things for, because, on account of (δια) the name of Jesus Christ. That word "endured" (βασταζω) means to lift something or carry or bear something (*Ibid.*, p. 78). These Ephesians carried the weight and bore up under the burdens for the name of Jesus Christ. They bore up in resisting false apostles and in any pressure that hit them for the name of Jesus Christ.

The idea of enduring “for My name’s sake” includes the idea defending everything true to the name of Jesus Christ. They defended salvation by pure grace by only believing in the name of Jesus Christ. They defended Christ’s Deity. They defended His death, burial, resurrection, and His substitution sacrifice. They stood for everything the name of Jesus meant. Jesus commends the church for this.

Positive Reality #8 - Jesus Christ had full knowledge of their determined persistence . **2:3c**

The word “grown weary” (κοπιαω) is one that implies getting so fatigued at some point that one is not able to continue (*Ibid.*, p. 254). The perfect tense of the verb indicates that there is a point in which some people become weary and then continue on in that state in the present and on into the future. The implication of this verb with the negative “not grow weary” is that they never even thought about starting to give up. As Robert Thomas said, “Never did they entertain any thought of giving up. ... Their loyalty to the Lord preempted weariness” (*Revelation An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 139).

Jesus Christ commended this church because they kept ministering and worshipping no matter how difficult or pressured things became.

When you read positive credentials like this, one would tend to think this was the perfect church. It certainly had much going for it and to many people it would seem to be flawless. But not to the all-knowing and all-seeing eyes of Jesus Christ.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #5 – Christ’s assessment of things negative in the church.
2:4

The conjunction “but” (αλλα) which begins **verse 4** sits in contrast to the positives in **verses 2-3**. As Jesus Christ watched this church in Ephesus, there was one negative thing that plagued it; they “left their first love.” **Notice He does not say they lost their first love; they left it. Although leaving it would result in a church that looked like they lost it. This was a major negative in the mind of Jesus Christ.** In fact, the Greek is very emphatic; Christ, Himself, had this “against” them.

The verb “left” (αφημι) is aorist, active, indicative. What this means is that it is a fact (indicative mood) that there was a point in time (aorist tense) in which this church actively left its first love (active voice). The word “left” means there was a point in time when they let go, and forsook, and set away their first love (Smith, p. 71). Both words “love” and “first” have an article, so this is something very specific. The noun used for love is “agape,” which is the nonemotional calculated kind of love, which is God’s kind of love.

Now of course the main question that must be asked is “what was the first love?” In Greek “the first love” is emphatic (την αγαπην την πρωτην). At some point in time in the past, the church of Ephesus let go of its first love and the interpretive question is, just what exactly was the first love that they left? **One clue is that in verse 5 it seems that certain first “deeds” were missing that could be reinstated.**

There are four possibilities as to what this “first love” was:

(Possibility #1) - They left their first love which is the Lord .

It is interesting that Paul’s last message to the Ephesian church is a message about loving the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 6:24), which could mean he sensed a potential problem. It is possible that even though this was a dedicated church and, in many ways, a very disciplined church, they departed from their love for the Lord. They were so busy and so active that they stopped cultivating an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. It is possible the church had become cold and filled with “lifeless orthodoxy.”

A couple of problems with this view are: **1)** Loving the Lord is not a deed; it is more an attitude of heart. Since Christ commends them for so many deeds and works, if lacking a love for Him were the issue, He would not challenge them about “deeds” but about heart and mind focus. **2)** Christ commends them for being willing to endure so much for the name of Jesus Christ (**2:3**).

(Possibility #2) - They left their first love which is their enthusiasm for the work of God.

The basic problem with this view is that **verse 3** seems to suggest that they still were very enthused and had not grown weary and Christ commends them for this.

(Possibility #3) - They left their first love which had been a love for each other.

This view suggests that the church had stopped caring for each other in the church.

We know from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians over thirty years earlier that their love was known all over the world (Ephesians 1:15) and there did seem to be some real personality conflicts developing between believers in this church (Ephesians 4:1, 30-32; 5:1-2, 21, 22, 25; 6:1, 4, 5; I Timothy 1:3-5).

We also know from John’s writings which were written from Ephesus, that he seems to stress this theme of loving each other many times (John 13:34-35; I John 2:9-10; 3:14, 23; 4:7, 11, 20-21; II John 5-6; III John 6).

It is possible that in spite of all of the activity at the church the believers stopped caring for each other and Christ challenges them to get back to this action.

(Possibility #4) - They left their first love which was a love for careful teaching and accurate instruction of the Scriptures .

As we observed earlier, the church of Ephesus was initially first known for having the greatest Bible teachers in existence connected to it. Nine written New Testament books of the Bible may be directly linked to Ephesus. This church started with a love for the written Scriptures.

When we carefully examine Paul's two letters to Timothy who was in Ephesus, there can be little doubt that Paul stresses to him the importance of continuing to carefully teach the Scriptures (I Timothy 1:3-7; 2:11-12; 4:6, 11, 13-16; 5:7, 17; 6:3, 17, 18; II Timothy 1:13; 2:14-15, 24; 3:10, 14, 16-17; 4:1-3, 15). It is very clear that Paul sensed a real need to carefully and continually teach the Scriptures to this church in Ephesus.

It is also clear from this book of Revelation that the emphasis is on carefully understanding the written words of the written Scriptures (i.e. Rev. 22:18-19). This point is also stressed in John's other writings (I John 1:4; 2:1, 7, 12, 13, 14, 21, 26; 5:13; II John 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 12; II John 3, 4, 12, 13).

It is very possible that this church, which was first known for its focus on the written Word of God, had left that focus. Even though it had a lot of action, it left its focus on the written Scriptures. Christ is warning this church to get back to its first love for the written Word of God. Truth is sound doctrine produces sound lives and a sound love.

Certainly we may connect everything to a proper love for Jesus Christ. If we have a true intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, we will have a love for the Scriptures and for each other.

There are some who suggest that the "first love" means that many were in the church working who really were not saved, so Christ is challenging the church to get back to the basics of the gospel in that people need to believe on Jesus Christ. I reject this position completely for two reasons: 1) You cannot leave your first love if you never had a first love; 2) God never commends the works of nonbelievers. Their works are as filthy rags.

These were true believers who had left their first love.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #6 – Christ's command for obedience . 2:5

Jesus Christ is not just an idle spectator of His church and He demands that Biblical problems get Biblically fixed. In this verse He gives His church three commands:

Command #1 - Continually remember from where you have fallen. 2:5a

The present tense of the verb (μνημονευε) in the imperative means that this is a command to keep on remembering. There were memories already there and Jesus Christ commanded them to keep calling those memories to their minds. Now the particular memory He demands they think about is the memory of how far they have fallen from their previous state. Jesus Christ wanted these believers to continually bring to their minds just how far they had fallen. They had not progressed; they had regressed. This certainly proves that you can be a believer who is in church and in all kinds of actions and still be going backwards in your relationship with God.

Dr. John Walvoord said, "So often spiritual defection, whether of mind or heart, comes from forgetting that which once was known" (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 57).

(78)

Command #2 - Immediately repent and change your mind once and for all. **2:5b**

Repentance is not just being sorry; it is changing one's thinking or mindset. The word "repent" (μετανοεω) means to change your thinking or change your mind. The aorist tense calls for immediate decisive action, as Thomas says "a decisive change of attitude..." (p. 142).

Jesus Christ is commanding His church to make an immediate, one point in time action to change one's thinking. We could understand this to mean "make an immediate and complete change of mind right now." They did not need to pray about this; they needed to do this. This was not to be a long drawn out process; they needed to make a quick and effective decision.

Command #3 - Immediately act and do the first works. **2:5c**

There needed to be an immediate "corporate recovery" by this church. The aorist imperative demands that this be put into action at one point of time. This church needed to get back to its first love immediately. They needed to immediately implement the same focus that the church had at its "earliest stage of existence."

One thing that is very important is that from a public perspective, this church had much that looked so good and healthy but not from God's internal perspective. This church did not have the right quality to it. Man's view and God's view are two different things. Most men would commend this church and Christ is warning it.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #7 – Christ promises judgment for persistent disobedience. **2:5d-e**

Jesus Christ gives two very threatening warnings to the church if it does not immediately respond to Him:

Threatening Warning #1 - Christ will Personally come and judge the church. **2:5d**

Most of the time it is the Holy Spirit who convicts and does things in the church which may be either positive or negative. This is a special visit to the church made by God the Son and it is not a positive visit. This would be a specific crisis judgment that Christ Himself would carry out in regard to this church.

This is the kind of visit from Jesus Christ you do not want. William Newell called this Christ's "fatal visit" (*Revelation Chapter By Chapter*, p. 40).

Threatening Warning #2 - Christ will Personally remove your lampstand. **2:5e**

The Greek word “remove” (κινεω) is one that indicates movement or motion which removes something (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 247). The word is used again in Revelation 6:14. We get our English word “kinetic” from this Greek word which has to do with motion.

We have already learned that the lampstand is representative of each church (Revelation 1:20). The present location of the lampstand was that of being closely related to Jesus Christ, as He was in the center or midst of the seven lampstands (1:13; **2:1**). As we saw from the O.T., the lampstand’s job was to continually reflect what was in the middle. **Since Jesus Christ was in the middle of the lampstands, the church is to be a continual reflection of Jesus Christ unto God.**

Jesus Christ can stop a church from reflecting the glory of God and see to it that it never reflects that glory ever again. Via direct judgment He can extinguish the light of the church, which would mean a loss of powerful testimony and loss of the glory of God.

What Christ is warning here is that if the church refuses to respond to the Word of God and repent, He will Personally see to it that there is so much negative movement stirred up in the church that it will no longer reflect the glory of God. Jesus Christ will Personally stir up the church and He will move things so that the church will be rendered worthless in the sight and mind of God.

Years ago David Jeremiah visited Europe and while he was in London he went to the great Metropolitan Tabernacle where Charles Spurgeon once preached to thousands. He said what he saw was a vast hall with less than one hundred people in it. What once was one of the great churches of the world that reflected the glory of God, no longer reflected that glory (*Escape from the Coming Night*, p. 57). It is as if that lampstand has been removed.

J. Vernon McGee said Jesus Christ is still watching the lamps and He will trim the wicks or use a snuffer when the church refuses to adjust in light of His word (*Revelation*, Vol. 5, p. 903).

POINT OF COMMUNCIATION #8 – Christ’s additional positive action in the church. **2:6**

The “yet this” (αλλα τουτο) is another grammatical contrast with the preceding negatives. **Even though Christ condemns them because they did not have the right kind of love , He commends them because they did have the right kind of hate .** The Ephesian church may have lost its first love but it did have the right hate. Obviously the church is to be a place that hates certain things if it is to be commended by Jesus Christ. This hatred was very proper and very much applauded by Jesus Christ.

(80)

There is no possible way that any church that strives to be politically correct can please God. It is to be a place that hates things and stands against things and stands for what is Biblically right. Now the thing the Ephesians are being commended for is their hatred “of the works of the Nicolaitans.”

There have been two main views as to who the Nicolaitans actually were and taught:

(View #1) - A group of leaders who promoted immorality ;

(View #2) - A group of leaders who promoted religious dominance .

(View #1) - A sect of people who followed Nicolas of Antioch, who was a Jewish proselyte, one of the original seven deacons who defected and became an apostate (Acts 6:5). This sect followed Nicolaus who promoted a licentious indulging of the flesh. C. I. Scofield listed several early church fathers who said that this group was a group that lived licentiously and taught others to do the same (*Scofield Reference Bible*, NASV, p. 1723).

Some have said that Nicolaus became a lax teacher. Having come out of Judaistic legalism, he embraced grace but went far beyond Biblical boundaries and promoted idolatry and immorality.

(View #2) - A group based on the two Greek words that form Nicolaitan: nikos (νικος) which means to conquer and have victory, and laos (λαος) which means people. Combined the Greek word refers to one who conquers or dominates people. Many believe this was the basis of evil clerical hierarchy that devours people.

The overwhelming support from early church history is the first view. Ancient voices from Church History cry out and trace this to Nicolas who promoted a lifestyle of licentious immorality. Irenaeus was the first to point this out and this opinion has strong support from many others of the early church: Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius.

The thing that pleased Jesus Christ is that the people in this church hated this group and their teaching just like He did (Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 44:4; Amos 5:21; Zechariah 8:17). He commends them for this hatred.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #9 – Christ’s message to the believer . **2:7a**

The believer is one who has ears to hear. The believer is the one who may hear what the Spirit of God is saying through the Word of God at the church of God. The message that the believer needs to hear is one that says - we need to keep our focus on Jesus Christ and the Word of God or else God can stop us from shining forth His glory.

POINT OF COMMUNICATION #10 – Christ’s message to the unbeliever . 2:7b

Some have said that the term “overcomer” refers to a special class of spiritual Christians rather than those unspiritual. However, both theologically and Biblically this cannot be supported.

The one “who overcomes” is defined by John in I John 5:4-5. **The overcomer is one who believes on Jesus Christ.** As Thomas said, “‘Overcomer’ is best understood as a general designation applicable to all believers” (Vol. 1, p. 152).

The common privilege of all believers will be the privilege of eating from the “tree of life.”

The “tree of life” brings to mind Genesis 2:9 and 3:22 and looks forward to the tree in eternity from which only believers who are washed in the blood of the Lamb have a right to eat (Rev. 22:2, 14, 19).

The word “tree” is the same word used in reference to the cross of Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:24; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29). This promise to be able to eat from the tree of life is made as one of the great benefits to believers in view of the redemptive cross-work of Jesus Christ.

The promise of Jesus Christ is, if a person will believe on Him, he will have the privilege of eating from the tree of life that is located in the “Paradise of God.” There are two other places in Scripture where this Paradise of God is referred to: 1) Luke 23:43 in which a thief hanging next to Christ was promised by Jesus Christ that he would be in Paradise with him that very day; 2) II Corinthians 12:4 in which Paul said he was actually caught up to this Paradise, which is the third heaven (II Cor. 12:2), the place where God lives.

The tree is located at the abode of God and all believers are promised that they will be able to eat of this tree.

Ephesus may be analyzed from four perspectives:

1. **Historically** - Ephesus was a literal church with a literal problem of leaving its first love. It is known that the church did survive and continue to make an impact for a few years; however, after the 5th century there was a major decline and since the 14th century the church has been uninhabited. Christ ended up literally removing the church. Today there is a ruined archway, a Muslim dwelling, and a castle, but no church. It is gone. What was once the Biblical instruction center of the entire world is gone.
2. **Prophetically** - Ephesus is a prophetic representative of the apostolic church dating from Pentecost (Acts 2) until about A.D. 100. The apostolic church was a church of sound doctrine with a major emphasis on Biblical teaching and instruction. Ephesus represents the first church in God’s Grace Age; the apostolic church focused on apostolic instruction.

3. **Representatively** - Ephesus represents any church in any age in which it leaves its first love, which includes a love for the Lord, a love for the written Scriptures carefully taught, and ultimate a love for each other. This kind of church may have a lot of action in it with all kinds of people and all kinds of ministries. What this kind of church needs to realize is it is on the verge of being removed.
4. **Individually** - Ephesus represents individuals who go to church who have lost their love for the Lord, the Word carefully taught, and one another. These believers risk losing their effectiveness and risk losing many blessings.