

Letter to the Church of Ephesus

General Observation On The 7 Letters

- Jews and Christians, at this time, were under heavy persecution toward the end of Domitian's reign (AD 89-96).
- one instance of martyrdom (Revelation 2:13; cf. 6:9), is thought by many scholars to have been written during Domitian's reign
- The letters contain words of commendation, concern, command, and counsel
- strength to the church to overcome all the trials and persecution that they may be included in the Rapture to escape the 7-year Tribulation (Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.).

Where We Left Off

- John was in the Spirit saw Jesus amid 7 golden candlesticks and in His right hand are 7 stars. The seven stars are angels of the seven churches; the seven lampstands are the seven churches.
- His appearance. like a son of man, wearing a long robe, golden sash hairs were white as white wool, as snow; eyes as flame of fire, feet as refined burnished bronze, his voice as the roar of many waters; from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; his face as the sun shining in full strength. (Matthew 17:5; Act 22:6)
- His name: I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore. (Revelation 1:17-18)

A Vision of Christ's Ministry in the Church



- John's commission is to write in a book what he sees and send it to the 7 churches in Asia Minor (present day Turkey).
- Other churches of Asia were not mentioned but these 7 churches were selected to represent the different spiritual conditions of various types of local churches throughout church history so that the messages were not meant only for the mentioned churches but for churches in these end times.

The Lord Judges The Churches

- The Lord Jesus Christ Himself speaking quoted word for word best preaching on proper Church conduct Jesus Himself preaching
- The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking not only to these 7 Churches but even the present last day churches.
- How do we measure up to His standard as church as well as individually. This requires self-examination and repentance.
- “The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel. 16:7).
- When Jesus judges the spiritual state of churches, He does not raise the issue of size nor does He raise the issue of financial status.

Hear What the Spirit Saith

- The Lord Jesus repeats His call 7 times in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
- The bottom line to the churches is to repent, watch, hold fast, overcome, and obey. Now, though the messages to the 7 churches were for each of the churches as churches. however, the messages were also addressed to individuals, and promises are given to those who hear what the Spirit says.
- The Grading System is Pass or Fail. They are either blameless and right in all areas or they fail. A strength in one area does not offset a deficiency in another area and there is no accommodation for failure in any area. A deficient behavior is not tolerated, punishment is swift and severe – the candlestick is summarily removed and there is no right to appeal.

Message to the Churches

- The message to the churches was addressed through the angels (Gr. *aggelos*, from *ἀγγέλλω* *aggellō* (probably derived from G71; compare G34; to bring tidings); a messenger) to the churches. The word “angels” is used here means human messenger and not angelic beings. (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24 – John the Baptist was the messenger (*aggelos*) sent before to prepare the way of Jesus Christ.) Corrective messages committed to the angels are to be applied to the church not by angelic beings but by human messengers, e.g., the pastor or elder of a church.
- Christ addresses his judgment, rebuke, and directions to the pastors or elders or bishops. The pastor/elder/bishop is responsible for the spiritual state of the church. Woe to you pastors/elders/bishops that take lightly this charge. (James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.)

The Messengers

- James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. How is judgment executed upon every believer especially the leaders and teachers of the church:
 - a) First, knowing what to do makes one accountable to do it. James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin. You will be judged because you knew what you should do but failed to do it. Teachers, by teaching, are assumed to know what they ought to do and, therefore, they have greater judgment if they fall short.
 - b) Second, knowing more makes one more accountable. “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:48b) Pastors/Teachers will be judged with greater judgment because they know more. They study the Bible more than most people. So, pastors/teachers are responsible to teach faithfully. If we are not careful, we will receive no crown before the Lord Jesus in His Bema seat of judgment (2Corinthians 5:10)

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- **The Commendation** (Revelation 2:2, 3, 6). Jesus Christ commended the Ephesians for their positive actions:
 - For their “toil” (labor to the point of exhaustion.) In the midst of the opposition, the Ephesians were aggressively promoting the cause of Christ and they remained faithful to the Lord without getting weary.
 - They held a high and holy standard of behavior sensitive to sin.
 - They put to test those who call themselves apostles were found to be false. Through all the difficulties the Ephesians faced for forty years through hard labor and patient enduring of trials and refusal to tolerate evil.
 - “You hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Who are the Nicolaitans? Revelation 2:14-15 seems to suggest that the Nicolaitans borrowed the doctrine of Balaam. So, they must have led people to practice idolatry and sexual immorality.

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- The Concerns. “You have left your first love.” (Revelation 2:4)
 - The Ephesians maintained their doctrinal purity but they have left their first love. Their Christian responsibilities and service to the Lord Jesus became mechanical. After loving the Lord Jesus Christ for forty years, their affection has cooled down.
 - The Ephesians thought they love the Lord “good enough”. This is when we become content with less than Lord's best, thus, denying us the true riches of our life in Christ.
 - Jesus loves us like a husband loves the wife of his youth. He wants us to return His love. The Bible says, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1John 4:19) The grave danger is seen when His love is unreciprocated. The Lord says, I will remove your lampstand out of its place.

Letter to the Church of Ephesus

- **The Command.** “Repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:5)
 - When the lampstand is taken away, they may still have their buildings, they may still have their programs, their busy schedule and all the externals, they may still be able to attract new people with their pretty facilities and entertaining programs but the power of the Lord will be missing. He will leave them to go through the motions of Christianity, without the living God in their midst. Could there be anything more empty or sad?
 - Jesus said repent, do the deeds you did at first.

Letter to the Church of Ephesus

- **The Command.** “Repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:5)
 - Jesus said repent, do the deeds you did at first. “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” How?
 - First, they needed to literally “keep on remembering where they have fallen. Forgetfulness starts when the church starts to rely more on their understanding and expertise rather than walking by faith in the Lord.
 - 2) Second, they needed to repent, turn away from their sins, because to fail to love the Lord fully is sin. (Mk 12:30)
 - 3) Finally, they have to demonstrate the genuineness of their repentance and return to their original deeds (richness of Bible study, devotion to prayer and passion for worship).

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- **The Counsel.** The letter closes with an exhortation and a promise. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7)
 - The exhortation does not apply to the Ephesian church only but it applies to all churches by the use of “churches” (plural). It does not only apply to churches but it is also for individuals by the use of the word “he”. “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”
 - The promise is addressed to “him who overcomes.” In the first epistle of the apostle John, he defines overcoming. “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except for the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1John 5:4-5) True believers are overcomers and the Lord gives them the grace and the power to overcome the evils of this world.

Letter to the Church of Ephesus

- **Application.** What is the Lord Jesus saying to you today?
 - Let us be discerning of false teachers and reject their false teachings.
 - We should not be weary but endure and hard work and labor for the Lord's sake.
 - Many tend to focus solely on doctrinal purity and hard work to the exclusion of true love for Christ. As this letter shows, no amount of zeal for the truth or moral rectitude can replace a heart full of love for Jesus.
 - We must return to our initial zealous love of our brethren, of God and of doing His work. "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Self-Examination

- It is so easy to get lost in our busyness in serving the Lord. Have we devoted ourselves to the service of the Lord rather than devote ourselves to the Jesus? Have our works for the Lord taken our love for Jesus? James said that faith without works is dead. (James 2:26) Here we can also say that works without love is dead.
- Has our love for Jesus waned? Has something or someone competed with our love for Jesus? Have you lost the thrill of meeting the Lord in your devotion time and in reading the Scriptures? Compare it with the warmth of our love for Jesus when we first trusted Him from smallest to the greatest needs? Has our love for Him grown colder? If you have drifted from Him, Jesus says, Repent! Jesus wants us to return to our first love, to the place and time in our lives when He was everything to us.
- That is where He wants us to be this morning. Return to Jesus! Lay hold on Him!