

Revelation 2.1-7

“Cold, Hard Truth”

Trying to help cousins in Honolulu find a Church > Email Experience!!

He – Medical Doctor, Neurologist – She – Federal Reserve Bank – Son – 3 yrs.

Many Denominations / Theological Traditions / Music & Ministry Styles

Recommend One > They Go > Write back what it is ‘REALLY LIKE’

Cannot Judge a Church by its Website > Must Go and SEE FOR YOURSELF
CHURCHES > Very Different > Fundamentally Same > THEN AND NOW

1. Lord among the Lampstands 2. People in the Pews 3. Rekindling the Romance

1. Lord among the Lampstands

a. Inseparable WHEN JOHN SEES CHRIST > HE SEES THE CHURCH

v. 1 “him who...walks among the seven golden lampstands”

JOHN’S FIRST GLIMPSE of Glory 1.12,13 “when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, *and among the lampstands was someone* "like a son of man,"

Many years before JOHN HEARD PROMISE OF RISEN JESUS

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28.20

PAUL TO EPHESIANS “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” 1.22,23

RESPONSIBILITY of the Leaders v. 1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus”

WORD ‘angel’ means MESSENGER > STEALTH Reference for their Protection?
People knew NAMES of Leaders Churches > John hoped Roman Gov’t Did Not

1.20 “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

RISEN CHRIST HOLDS THESE LEADERS / THESE CHURCHES

v. 1 “him who holds the seven stars in his right hand

b. Important What MATTERS MOST > Is He there? What does He think?

GREAT HEROES SERVED the Ephesians Church

Apostle Paul, Timothy, Apostle John > Not Paulists, Timothists, Johanists

v. 1 “the church in Ephesus” v. 3 “for my name”

“to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”
Ephesians 3.21

WITHOUT CHRIST > Church is CLOSED v. 5 “If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

TODAY > Ephesus is Collection of Stones > No People, just Ancient Relics

LAMPSTAND > LIGHT of Christ > MOVED, WHOLE CITY MOVED

Formerly Important Seaport > Cayster River so much SILT > Sea now miles away!

c. Individuals CHURCHES are Collections of People > Diverse Characteristics

Ephesus ‘the metropolis of Asia’ > Closest to Patmos > 100 kms. across Aegean

¼ of Million Citizens > Major City in Roman Province of Asia

Had One of World’s Largest Libraries > Was Popular Center of Occult Arts

Magnificent Temple to Mother Goddess > Artemis to Greeks / Diana to Romans

1 of 7 Wonders of the Ancient World > Shrine to Pilgrims > Source of Pride and

Income to Ephesian Leaders > Scandal to the Ephesian Christians

Each Individual Ephesian is addressed by the Lord Jesus -

v. 7 “He who has an ear, let him hear” People in Church > Each One Hear!!

LETTERS TO ONE CHURCH > Message to ALL CHURCHES thru ALL TIME

v. 7 “what the Spirit says to the churches” > Phrase ends ALL SEVEN LETTERS

Paul also wrote letters to Seven Churches >

Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica

HUMAN AUTHORS > wrote Transient Message carry church members thru Life

DIVINE AUTHOR > wrote Timeless Message for all God’s People in Christ

d. Insight WE Judge Churches by Buildings, Programs, and Websites...

Jesus' Analysis more PENETRATING v. 2 "I know your deeds...I know that you"

OF COURSE > He walks among the Lampstands > He dwells among His People
7 Churches > Diagnostic Analysis of Him whose "eyes were like blazing fire" 1.14

"The churches in Revelation 2-3 number exactly seven, that number symbolizes completeness. They stand for all the churches of that time and ours. In fact, the triumphs, failures, and struggles of these churches are a kind of miniature catalogue of the sorts of things we can expect to find in other churches throughout history... We likewise need Christlike discernment, illumined by the Spirit and by these examples, if we are to evaluate our own church situation accurately and respond faithfully."
Vern S. Poythress

2. The People in the Pews

a. Commendation Jesus sees their GOOD WORKS & Praises them...right model

1) Dilligence v. 2 "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance."

HARD WORK to Swim Upstream amidst the MORAL EVIL and IDOLATRY
To Shine the Light of Jesus amidst the DARKNESS OF ROMAN EPHESUS

v. 3 "You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary."

GREAT STORY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH

"God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them... and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly... In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power."
Acts 19.12-20

"Paul had left Ephesus and died long ago, but the unpopularity of Christians still lingered. Christians in Ephesus knew what it was to be hated, to be snubbed in public and maligned in private. Some found business hard, since they were losing customers. Others found shopping a problem as a number of tradesmen would not sell to Christians."
John R.W. Stott

PERHAPS ECONOMIC BOYCOTT for Refusing to Worship Emperor or Diana
13.17 “no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name”

When the Going Got Tough > the Ephesian Christians KEPT GOING

2) Doctrine

v. 2 “I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.”

Church was FOUNDED on STRONG TEACHING

“Paul entered the synagogue (in Ephesus) and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God...he had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” Acts 19.8-10

OVER 3000 hours of Bible Teaching by Greatest Theologian in Church History

Paul’s Letter to Church at Ephesus > RICH, DEEP TRUTHS of Theology

Paul’s Last visit with Ephesian Elders > DOCTRINAL WARNING

“Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” Acts 20.28-31

PAUL to Timothy, Bp. of Ephesus – “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.”

1 Timothy 1.3,4

THEOLOGICAL RADAR WAS FULLY OPERATIONAL

No Scud Missiles of Heresy could Sneak into their Orthodox Assembly

v. 6 “You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

NOT SURE > Who they were, or what they believed > named only in these letters
NIKOLAOS – in Greek = “destroyer of the people” > fitting name of Sect

FIRST JOHN > Written by John for the Church in Ephesus

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” 1 John 4.1

“You all live according to the truth and no heresy has a home among you; no, you do not so much as listen to anyone if speaks against the truth in Jesus Christ.”

2nd Century Letter to Ephesian Church by Bishop Ignatius of Antioch

RIGHTEOUS EXAMPLE of Orthodox BELIEF and BEHAVIOR

b. Criticism v. 4 “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”

DILLIGENCE & DOCTRINE become DRUDGERY > No Longer a DEVOTION
Fallen from HEIGHTS of Devotion to the PLAINS of Mediocrity > Backsliding

Jesus WARNED - “Because of the increase of wickedness,

the love of most will grow cold”

Matthew 24.12

Like RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS sang, “You’ve lost that loving feeling, baby...”

COMMENTATORS ASK > Love for God or Man? > Answer? Yes! Inseparable!

Paul’s final words in Letter to Ephesians

“Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love” Ephesians 6.24

30 years have passed > Embers of their LOVE are COOLING

Love fueled Jacob for 7 Years: “Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.” Genesis 29.20

CHURCH > Hard Work, Steadfast, Doctrinally Solid > No Love COLD & HARD

BIBLICAL BALANCE - “speaking the truth in love” Ephesians 4.15

Love without Truth: TOO SOFT / Truth without Love: TOO HARD

EMPHASIS of Letter > They were TIRED v. 3 You have *persevered* and have *endured hardships* for my name, and have *not grown weary*.

“The church seems to have fallen back into the defensive posture of orthodoxy rather than continue the offensive of evangelism. This may have been due to the pressures which Ephesus was putting upon the church, thus the double reference to endurance.”

M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

SUFFERING is SOFTENED and SWEETENED by Love > without Sour, Cynical
 ONLY YOU & JESUS know What is in YOUR HEART > But He DOES KNOW
 He sees your DILLIGENCE & DOCTRINE > but he also wants your Devotion
 PETER could be Forgiven for Denials > Impt. Question ‘Peter do you love me?’
 True Love for God results in:

1. Deeper Worship

Student in Christian College in Tennessee > Served in Black American Church
 All week studied Bible & Theology > Faculty of Excellent Teachers
 Sundays > Alton Park Bible Church > Pastor J.C. Upton
 Preached > Average Sermons > Sometimes Faulty Exegesis, Weak Interpretation
 Prayed > “Lord we love you today...Lord I love you...” Not just PASTOR TALK
 Maybe my Theology was BETTER > Many Sundays my Heart was HARD, COLD

Not trying to invade the SACRED CORRIDORS of your HEART
 I do NOT Belong There > No Man Does > BUT GOD DOES > Made your Heart
 Does not want you to just SING in Church > Wants you to WORSHIP > Love Him

“A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the
 Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of *worshippers the Father seeks*”
 John 4.23

GOD is Seeking Worship > He who NEEDS NOTHING wants our Worship!
 Arrive at ICF? Late? Argued with Spouse? Shouted at Kids? Grumbled at Traffic?
 Is this way to appear before the LIVING GOD? Does this show you LOVE HIM?

9 am PRAYER Great Heart Prep. for my Worship > 9.50 sit w/ Fam & PRAY

2. Prompter Obedience Love is more than just an Emotion > LOYALTY

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” John 14.15

How dare we claim to love Him if we ignore what He has told us to do.
 Biblical love is GIVING, not GETTING > Give Glory, Praise, & Pleasure to God

“My heart I offer you, promptly and sincerely.” John Calvin’s LIFE MOTTO

“Every virtue carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. It seems probable that desire for sound teaching and the resulting forthright action taken to exclude all impostors had created a climate of suspicion in which love within the believing community could no longer exist... Good works and pure doctrine are not adequate substitutes for that rich relationship of mutual love shared by those who have experienced for the first time the redemptive love of God.” Robert Mounce

3. More Sacrificial Love for Others

First yr of College in CA > led weekly Bible Study on campus of my former HS
 Big, Aggressive MORMON Group > Surrounded by them on HS Campus one Day
 Didn't know much about them, 1 thing for sure > They were wrong, I was right!
 They sought to prove to me that they were REAL CHRISTIANS
 Almost chanting, “We believe in Jesus Christ, we believe in Jesus Christ”
 ENRAGED by them I shouted, “NONE OF YOU ARE CHRISTIANS!!”
 Heads all across the Schoolyard Turned and Looked!
 Mormons just walked away STUNNED > Get away from this MANIAC!!
 I was Right – they are Wrong – but I did not act Right > I did not LOVE THEM

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 1 John 4.20

SPECIAL NEEDS DEMAND SPECIAL LOVE “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” 1 John 3.16-18

3. Rekindling the Romance

a. Look Back v. 5 “Remember the height from which you have fallen!”

BUST OUT the Wedding Photos and Remember that Happy Day of Love!

PRODIGAL SON > Got tired of PIG'S FOOD > REMEMBERED
 Father's Servants had BETTER GRUB > Here he was STARVING to DEATH

“Remember” CONTINUOUS ACTION “keep on remembering, never forget”
 Do not LIVE IN the PAST > LIVE NEAR the CROSS > where Jesus Died for You

b. Look Forward Temple of Artemis > Built on site of Ancient Tree-Shrine
 JESUS exceeds Diana > OFFERS TREE OF LIFE > Endless Delight, Eternal Life

v. 7 “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

“Tree of Life” > in the CENTER of the Garden of Eden
 BLOCKED to SINFUL, CURSED Adam and Eve > Not Invited to Eat

“The LORD God banished him (Adam) from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.” Genesis 3.23,24

MERCY > Who wants to Live forever in Fallen, Sinful, Decaying Bodies?

NOW in Christ > New Heaven and Earth > New Creation by Grace
 NEW GARDEN > NEW TREE OF LIFE > People made New will Enjoy

“On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22.2

“Paradise regained is greater and more glorious than paradise lost, just as the fulfillment is more than the promise and the harvest than the seed. As the conclusion of this book of Revelation shows, in the renewed and glorified creation the tree of life will be unfailingly fruitful and the multitude of the redeemed will freely partake of its plenty. Thus is symbolised the fullness of that everlasting life in Christ which God’s faithful ones are given to inherit.” Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

c. Look to Him

v. 7 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life”

Overcomers in Revelation > NOT Supermen & Superwomen, Bible Action Heroes
 Those who have remained faithful to Christ to the very end – He is the Overcomer!

v. 5 Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

“do the things you did at first” - NO FIRST LOVE / NO FIRST WORKS

Repentance > Active > Radical Redirection of your Entire Life > in His Strength!!

If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place
WITHOUT LOVE in the Church > There will be NO LIGHT IN THE CHURCH

Jesus WILL BUILD His Church > Hell's Best Weapons will not Stop its Advance
NOT PROMISE to Buildings, Programs, Preachers, or Satellite TV Ministries

Seeing Man's Cathedrals > turned into Bars, Brothels, and Mosques

Also see Relentless ADVANCE > God's Truth: Lives Changed, Families Restored

LAMPSTANDS Moved > God Rearranges Furniture > NOT EXTINGUISHED
QUESTION >

Is your light burning? Does His light shine in this place today? Do you Love Him?

“What is said here is that the lampstand of the Ephesian church will be moved, unless there is repentance, out of its place. This gives us to understand that the lampstand or candlestick with its light will be transferred elsewhere: a locality where before there was light may be left in darkness, but the light will not cease to burn and its brightness will enlighten others. The defection of a church is indeed a tragedy, both for the church and also for the local population on whom it should be beaming the light of the gospel. God's work continues, however, and he will raise up other churches to shed forth the light of his truth.” Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

Revelation 2

1. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

2. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

3. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

5. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

6. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices 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 the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.