

STUDYING THE BOOK OF REVELATION THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (4)



REVELATION 2 To the Church in Ephesus

Revelation 1:20 to Revelation 2:1-11
New International Version (NIV)

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[a] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*

To the Church in Ephesus

2:1 *"To the angel[b] 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 people, 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 the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far 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 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

More on the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Occasion and Purpose. Under the inspiration of the Spirit and the Old Testament, John had no doubt been reflecting on the horrifying events occurring both in Rome and Jerusalem when he was given "the prophecy" of what was impending – the intensification of the spiritual warfare confronting the church (1:3) perpetrated by an anti-Christian state and numerous anti-Christian religions. The purpose of this message was to provide pastoral encouragement to persecuted Christians by comforting, challenging, and proclaiming the sure and certain Christian hope, together with the assurance that in Christ they were sharing in the sovereign God's method of totally overcoming the forces of evil in all its manifestations. Revelation is also an evangelistic appeal to those who are presently living in the kingdom of darkness to enter the **Kingdom of Light** (22:17).



THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE APOCALYPSE (1:20)

	Commendation	Criticism	Instruction	Promise
Ephesus (2:1-7)	Rejects evil, perseveres, has patience	Love for Christ no longer fervent	Do the works you did at first	The tree of life
Smyrna (2:8-11)	Gracefully bears suffering	None	Be faithful until death	The crown of life
Pergamos (2:12-17)	Keeps the faith of Christ	Tolerates immorality, idolatry, and heresies	Repent	Hidden manna and a stone with a new name
Thyatira (2:18-29)	Love, service, faith, patience is greater than at first	Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality	Judgment coming; keep the faith	Rule over nations and receive morning star
Sardis (3:1-6)	Some have kept the faith	A dead church	Repent; strengthen what remains	Faithful honored and clothed in white
Philadelphia (3:7-13)	Perseveres in the faith	None	Keep the faith	A place in God's presence, a new name, and the New Jerusalem
Laodicea (3:14-22)	None	Indifferent	Be zealous and repent	Share Christ's throne

2:1-3:33 The seven churches addressed were actual churches in the cities mentioned. They are representative of all churches of that time, as well as churches in all subsequent generations. The letters are to be interpreted historically, pastorally, and practically, with immediate application instructing the seven actual Asian churches; with ongoing application to all local churches throughout church history, giving discernment as to where they stand spiritually before the Lord; and with ongoing personal application, exhorting the individual to be an overcomer. The structure of the letters fall into a sevenfold pattern:

1. A commission to the messenger of the church named:
2. A character description of Christ:
3. A commendation, with the exceptions of Sardis and Laodicea:
4. A censure, with the exception of Smyrna and Philadelphia;
5. A connection with various imperatives;
6. A challenge repeated seven times. Beginning with the fourth letter, the challenge follows the covenant promises;
7. A covenant promise, which is a facet of Christ Himself and is a gift to every member of the body of Christ.



2:4

your live. **Commit** yourself both emotionally and intellectually to Christ.

2:4 The spiritual vitality springing from **love** for the Lord had degenerated into orthodox routine.

2:5 I will come unto thee is present tense, referring not to the Second Coming, but to a spiritual coming in blessing or in judgment. **Remove thy candlestick:** A congregation may continue to exist without being light in the darkness.

2:6 The name **Nicolaitanes** is symbolic, meaning "*Conquering the Laity*." Apparently this group claimed some kind of superior status that permitted idolatry and immorality (*see 2:14,15*).

2:7 Overcometh is military terminology, suggesting combat against the forces of the Evil One (*see Eph. 6:10-18*). All believers are overcomers, but these who remain faithful in the midst of persecution and doctrinal error give proof to their faith. This is the primary emphasis in Revelation. **The tree of life** symbolizes spiritual sustenance to maintain eternal life. **Paradise** is a Persian word for garden, which was used to designate the heavenly garden of God (*Luke 23:43*). The symbolism suggest the perfect fellowship for God and humankind enjoyed in Eden before the Fall... **to be cont'd.**



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Dispensationalists see a prophetic application in the letters, suggesting they also outline seven stages of church history, culminating with the two end-time stages seen in the churches of Philadelphia and Laodicea.

2:1-7 Ephesus: An unloving, orthodox church in the foremost city of proconsular Asia (see Acts 19:20), and according to tradition, the residence of John before and after his imprisonment on Patmos.

Give your love for Jesus first place in