**Letters to the 7 Churches: Ephesus**

*Revelation 2:1-7*

Background

Revelation (by definition) means to uncover or to reveal. John identifies at the start that this is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1). The intent is that Jesus become clearly visible—in His full exaltation (Rev 1:7-20).

In the first verse, reference to Revelation warns the church of the dangers of sin and compromise with the world (Chapters 2-3), and teaches it how to properly worship God (Chaps 4-5).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Although difficult to understand at times, the book comes with a blessing in hearing and responding in obedience (1:3 and 22:7, 14). After an initial greeting to the seven churches, John sees a vision of the Son of Man (1:9-20). He sees seven golden lampstands (representing churches) and seven stars (that were in the Son of Man’s hands that represent messengers from the churches, v. 20).

Although these seven churches were actual, historical churches in Asia Minor, they represent the types of churches that perennially exist throughout the church age. What Christ says to these churches is relevant in all times.[[2]](#footnote-2)

7 noted points for each of the 7 churches

1. **Identification of “The One”**

**Revelation 2:1b**—*The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:*

**Revelation 1:13**—*and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.*

**Revelation 1:16**—*In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*

**Acts 2:36**—*Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

**1 Timothy 6:15**—*which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords*

**Revelation 19:16**—*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

1. **Identification of the church**

**Revelation 2:1a**—*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write…*

**Acts 18:18-21**—*Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea [*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+18%3A18-19&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-27576a)*]he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.****19****They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20**When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent,****21****but taking leave of them and saying, “I will return to you again if God wills,” he set sail from Ephesus.*

**Acts 20:31**—*Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*

**1 Timothy 1:3**—*As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines*

* John spent 3 years in Ephesus and likely wrote his 3 epistles from Ephesus.
* He would have been an Elder there (cf. 2 John 1; 3 John 1).
* Likely leading the church prior to his arrest and exile to Patmos

1. **Identification of the city**

**Revelation 2:1a**—*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write…*

* The Roman governor lived there
* Estimated population of 250,000-500,000
* Strategically located at the crossroads of 4 major Romans roads in Asia Minor
* Harbor town
* It was the center of worship for the goddess Artemis (Diana)

**Acts 19:27**—*Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.”*

**Acts 19:35**—*After quieting the crowd, the town clerk \*said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?*

1. **Identification of what they did well**

**Revelation 2:2-3, 6**—*‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;****3****and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary...****6****Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

* Deeds
* Toil
* Perseverance
* Could not tolerate evil men
* Discernment
* Purpose: “*Endured for My name’s sake*”
* Did not grow weary
* *Hated the deeds of the Nicholaitans—sensual temptations leading to sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols (2:14); lived a life of self-indulgence*

1. **Identification of what they did not do well**

**Revelation 2:4**—*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

**Ephesians 1:5***—He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will*

**Ephesians 3:17-19***—so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,****18****may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,****19****and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*

**Ephesians 6:23***—Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**2 John 6**—*And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.*

1. **Identification of how to change**

**Revelation 2:5**—*Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and 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.*

**Mark 12:30**—and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

**Matthew 3:1-2**—Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, **2**“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

**Matthew 4:17**—*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

This models how we should change:

1. Confront with love with a goal toward restoration (vv2-5)
2. Encouragement paves the way to correction (vv2-3, 6)
3. Correctly state the problem (vv4-5)
4. Remember your past, repent of your sin, return to your best (v5)
5. There are consequences to disobedience (v5)
6. Expectation that they would respond well (v7)[[3]](#footnote-3)
7. **Identification of exhortation and promise**

**Revelation 2:7**—*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’*

* Each of the 7 letters ends with “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
* Promises are connected to “*him who overcomes*”
* *Eat of the tree of life*

**Genesis 3:22**—*Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”*

**Revelation 22:2**—*was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*

**Revelation 22:14**—*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.*

* *“Paradise of God”* is heaven

**Luke 23:43**—*And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”*

**2 Corinthians 12:4**—*was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*

**Proverbs 4:23**—*Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
For from it flow the springs of life.*

1. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1-11, p. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The MacArthur Study Bible, p. 1993 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from *What would Jesus Say About Your Church?* By GB Scottland, p 51 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)