

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
April 13, 2022
The Church of Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7 KJV

[1] Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; [2] I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: [3] And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. [4] Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. [5] Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. [6] But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. [7] 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.

Much commentary exists over the writings to these seven churches. Some realities emerge among them. God's use of His number seven permeates the Bible. Seven was symbolic in ancient near eastern and Israelite culture and literature. It communicated a sense of "fullness" or "completeness" (שבע "seven" is spelled with the same consonants as the word שבע "complete/full"). This makes sense of the pervasive appearance of "seven" patterns throughout God's Word. In the appropriation of the seven churches Jesus is telling us that all churches (full and complete) are found somewhere among the seven. This would be true originally, historically, eschatologically and universally. Our own church can be found within these contexts or mixed among them. We would do well to evaluate our fellowship and constantly present it to the Lord for His inspection. Finally since we each are members of one body which is the body of Christ we ought also to find ourselves individually detailed through the accolades and warnings we will study. Let us approach this lesson by comparing the church in Ephesus to our own lives. Clearly Jesus wants His churches to follow and support Him and to accurately represent Him but more so He wants us as individuals to inspect ourselves constantly and always allow His Light to shine on us, revealing sin and error while also letting us see and know when we are pleasing the Savior. Romans 12:1, James 1:22, 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Next we acknowledge these letters are addressed to the angels of the churches. This word ἄγγελος or aggelos is a messenger; especially an "angel"; by implication a pastor: While the Pastor of a church would certainly be called accountable for both the praises and demerits a church could earn we must also understand the wisdom in God placing an angel of heaven to protect, defend and guide a particular church body over the span of years that consecutive Pastor's would lead. These letters are directed either way to individual churches and our lesson will help us in reckoning so but any Christian is held accountable only for his own actions. Romans 14:12, Hebrews 4:13, 2 Corinthians 5:10. In that vein let us see ourselves in these verses.

Let's dig in. Verse 1) *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden*

candlesticks; We are each held within the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, never to be let go. John 10:28-29. He walks in our midst when we meet as a group. Matthew 18:20. We are part of the precious golden fellowship of seven. Full and complete as children and as an entity. We lack nothing. The Holy Spirit fills every gap and unites every believer. Be thrilled with that fact! You belong! You have a purpose! Verse 2) *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:* All those good things you do that seem insignificant or unnoticed are known by Jesus. Every little detail, effort and shared heart are fully open to His appreciation. He is pleased with your efforts. He cares when you speak up and when you are cautious to remain silent. He hurts with you when you agonize over the horrors of today's world and its rejection of culture, morality and tradition. He joins you in rejecting the messages of false teachers on TV or the liars who lead neochristian cults that dishonor God's Truth. Proverbs 6:16-19. Verse 3) *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.* Ask yourself. "Have I truly worked hard, patiently and enduringly to promote the gospel of Christ?" Few may care but Jesus does. Don't worry about who doesn't know or who has not thanked you. He does and He will. Jeremiah 17:10. Verse 4) *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.* Now ask yourself this. "Am I doing the right things for the wrong reason? Is my religious effort overshadowing the pure joy of communion with Christ?" Please know Who you serve and why! Hebrews 10:35-39. Verse 5) *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Let's look at this from two points of view. If you fall, repent. If you fall again, repent again. Get back on "the wagon" and start again. Never quit! Proverbs 24:16. Jesus can move in "quickly" to reprimand you and if your whole local church is in sin with you, well, you can run but you can't hide. Many churches no longer exist. The Holy Spirit does not fool around among His candlesticks. He will judge! 1 Peter 4:17. Verse 6) *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* If you love what He loves, do you also hate what He hates? Jesus doesn't hate much but this Nicolaitan threat is a serious one. A popular view of Jesus is that His being all love means that He cannot hate anyone or anything. In light of this, Revelation 2:6 is a very curious statement. (Revelation 2:15) Commentaries vary on this but one generally accepted teaching comes to us from the second-century Church Father, Irenaeus who stated the following; "The Nicolaitans are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Practicing indulgent sin and leading others to do likewise is egregious indeed especially when teaching such as a doctrine of God. Some churches allow followers to literally pay for "indulgences". Here's your answer folks. Hate such practices! Adultery and sinful compromise are evil enough. Teaching others to do the same will result in the hatred of Christ. Punishment must follow. Matthew 18:6-10. Verse 7) *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.* Do you have ears? Listen to The Holy Spirit of Christ! Overcome! (νικάω; nikaō; to subdue, conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.) Got that? Get the Victory! Finish well. Please God with your life! Where will that get you? Back to the garden!

Paradise lost has been rescued by Christ. We will experience the joy that Adam and Eve first knew. Creation as God intended it. Compare Genesis 2:9, 3:17, 22 and 24. Look inside. Do you see the reflection of Christ in the mirror of your heart? Get the Victory!