

Revelation of Jesus Christ Study 9

Rev 2:1-7

- 1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:
- 2 ' 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.
- 4 ~'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.
- 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.
- 6 ~'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds 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 grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

The great late Francis Schaeffer once observed that “the meaning of the word Christian has been reduced to practically nothing, because the Christian as a symbol has been made to mean so little, it has come to mean everything and nothing” (*The mark of the Christian [Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1970], 11*)

The term Christian in contemporary usage can mean anyone who is not Jewish, anyone who lives in a “Christian” nation (as opposed, for example, to a Buddhist or an Islamic one), or anyone who claims any kind of allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Term evangelical is following the same trend toward imprecision.

But though the world may be confused about what a Christian is, the Bible is clear.

Christians are those who are savingly united to God through Jesus Christ, whose whom “*God has chosen from the beginning for salvation through Sanctification by the Spirit and Faith in the Truth*” (*2 Thess 2:13; Luke 18:7; Rom 8:33; Eph 1:4; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1-2; 2:10*)

As a result they have exercised saving faith in the only Savior;

Acts 4:12

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

The Lord Jesus Christ (*John 3:15-18; 36; 5:24; 6:47; Rom 1:16; 4:5; 10:10; 1 John 5:1*) and repented of their sins (*Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9*).

God has forgiven their sins (*Acts 10:43; Eph 1:7; 1 John 1:7, 9; Rev 1:5*), made them His children (*Rom 8:16-17; Gal 4:7; Eph 1:5; 5:1, 8; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:2*) and transformed them into new creatures (*2 Cor 5:17*)

indwelt by the Holy Spirit (*John 14:17; Rom 8:4-9, 11, 14; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Gal 4:6; 2 Tim 1:14; 1 John 3:24*)

Many things characterize Christians, including reverential fear of God (*2 Cor 7:1; Phil 2:12; 1 Pet 1:17*) a desire to imitate Him (*Eph 5:1; 1 John 2:6*) in holiness (*Matt 5:48; 2 Cor 7:1; Titus 2:11-12; Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 2:24; 2 Pet 3:11*) and obedience (*John 10:27; 14:21; 15:14; Rom 1:5; 16:26; Heb 5:9; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 John 3:24*)

But the supreme characteristic of a Christian is love for his Lord and God.

When challenged to name the single greatest commandment of the law, Jesus replied;

Matt 22:37-38

37 *And He said to him, " ' YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'*

38 *"This is the great and foremost commandment.*

He challenged His disciples to make love for Him the highest priority of their lives;

Matt 10:37-38

37 *" He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*

38 *"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*

In *John 14:21, 23* He added:

21 " He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

23 Jesus answered and said to him, " If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

True children of God, Jesus declared, will love Him:

John 8:42

42 *Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.*

1 Pet 1:8

8 *and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,*

And be known by Him:

1 Cor 8:3

3 *but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.*

To discern Peter's spiritual condition, Jesus asked him three times:

John 21:15-17

15 *So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs."*

16 *He *said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, " Shepherd My sheep."*

17 *He *said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, " Tend My sheep.*

Those who love Jesus are blessed:

Eph 6:24

24 *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love.*

Those who do not are cursed:

1 Cor 16:22

22 If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.

Paul defined Christians as those controlled by *“the love of Christ 2 Cor 5:14”*.

While love for the Lord Jesus Christ will always be present in true Christians, it can fluctuate in its intensity.

Christians will not always love Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to fail to do so is sin.

There is no better illustration in Scripture of the seriousness of allowing love for Christ to wane than this letter to the Church at Ephesus.

The seven churches addressed in Chapters 2 and 3 were actual existing churches when John wrote this letter.

But while not precisely duplicated, they also represent the types of churches that are generally present throughout the entire church age.

Five of the seven churches (Smyrna and Philadelphia being the exceptions) were rebuked for tolerating sin in their midst, not an uncommon occurrence in churches since.

The problems in those five churches ranged in severity from waning love at Ephesus to total apostasy at Laodicea.

Further, any church in any age could have a mixture of the sins that plagued these five churches.

Though Christ may have addressed the Ephesians church first because it was first on the postal route, it was also the most prominent church of the seven.

It was the mother church out of whose ministry the other six were founded (*Acts 19:10*) and gave its name to the inspired letter of Ephesians penned four decades earlier by the apostle Paul.

The contents of this first letter form the pattern for the other six.

It contains seven features:

The correspondent,

The church,

The city,

The commendation,

The concern,

The command,

The counsel.

THE CORRESPONDENT

Rev 2:1c

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

Though the writer is not named, the description makes it obvious who He is.

He is the One depicted as the glorious Lord of the church in *(1:9-20)*, the exalted Jesus Christ.

The phrases, **the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands**, are taken from the description of Christ in John's vision *(1:13. 16)*

In fact, Christ identifies Himself to each of the first five churches by using phrases from that vision *(2:8 with 1:18; 2:12 with 1:16; 2:18 with 1:14-15; 3:1 with 1:18)*

That reinforces the truth that He is the author of the letters; they are His direct word through the apostle John, to those local congregations and to churches like them in years beyond.

As noted in our previous study, **the seven stars** represent leaders from the seven churches.

That Christ **holds** them **in His right hand** indicates that they are His ministers, under His power as He mediates His sovereign rule in the church through its human leaders.

Christ further describes Himself as **the one who walks among the seven golden lampstands** (the seven churches; *1:20*), scrutinizing, examining, assessing, and evaluating them.

As its sovereign ruler, He has the authority to address the church.

THE CHURCH

Rev 2:1a

“the church in Ephesus”

Perhaps no church in history had as rich a heritage as the congregation at Ephesus.

The Gospel was introduced to that city by Paul's close friends and partners in ministry, Priscilla and Aquila.

Acts 18:18-19

18 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 Cenchræ 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.

And they were soon joined by the eloquent preacher and powerful debater Apollos

Acts 18:24-26

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and

*teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;
26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos laid the foundation or groundwork for Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

Now Paul stopped briefly in Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey (*Acts 18:19-21*), but his real ministry in that key city took place on his third missionary journey.

Arriving at Ephesus, he first encountered a group of Old Testament saints, followers of John the Baptist

Acts 19:1-7

1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.

2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."

4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

7 There were in all about twelve men.

After preaching to them and baptizing them, he began the three years work of building the church at Ephesus (*Acts 20:31*)

Later, on his way to Jerusalem near the end of his third missionary journey, he taught the elders of the Ephesian church the essential principles of church leadership

Acts 20:17-38

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

26 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 *"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*
 28 *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*
 29 *"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;*
 30 *and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
 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.*
 32 *"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*
 33 *"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.*
 34 *"You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.*
 35 *"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
 36 *When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.*
 37 *And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,*
 38 *grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.**

The gist of his teachings here was later expanded in his pastoral epistles (*1 Tim 1:3*) Onesiphorus, and Tychicus two more of Paul's fellow laborers, also ministered at Ephesus, also Timothy also served as pastor of this Church.

Finally, according to the testimony of the early church, the apostle John spent the last decades of his life at Ephesus from which he likely wrote his three epistles in which he calls himself *"the elder"* (*2 John 1; 3 John 1*)

He was no doubt leading the Ephesian church when he was arrested and exiled to Patmos.

Dramatic and remarkable events accompanied the birth of the Ephesian church.

Paul's ministry profoundly affected not only the city of Ephesus, but also the entire province of Asia

Acts 19:10

10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

As previously noted, it was undoubtedly during this time that the rest of the seven churches were founded.

God supernaturally affirmed Paul as His spokesman through a series of spectacular miracles

Acts 19:11-12

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,

12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

Attempting to emulate Paul's success, a group of Jewish would-be exorcists were beaten and humiliated by a demon-possessed Individual

Act 19:13-16.

13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

This event spread consternation and fear throughout the city, causing:

Acts 19:17

17 This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.

Shocked into realizing the futility of trusting in pagan practices, many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

Acts 19:18-19

"Many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver"

That staggering sum, equivalent to 50,000 days of workers' wages, reveals the magnitude of Ephesus's involvement in the magic arts.

Striking conversions of large numbers of Ephesians posed a severe economic threat to the city's pagan craftsmen.

Ephesus was the center of the worship of the goddess Artemis (known to the Romans as Diana).

The ornate temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

At the instigation of a silversmith named Demetrius the craftsmen, who saw their lucrative business endangered, reacted violently.

The ensuing riot threw Ephesus into chaos (*Acts 19:23-41*)

By the time of this letter, four decades had passed since the Ephesian church's tumultuous birth.

The Apostle Paul was gone, as were many of the first generation of believers converted under his ministry. A new situation called for another inspired letter to the Ephesians, this one from the Lord Himself, penned by the apostle John

Now we will look at the City next week also the commendation the Lord gives to this church, as well as the concern the Lord has for this church, also His command to the church and His counsel.