

February 25th, 2024
 Revelation 2:2-7 The Church of Ephesus

Revelation 2:2-7

2 “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. **3** I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. **4** But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. **5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. **6** Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’

[Show Revelation Chart]

- We are currently in what is called the “**Church Age**”
- The Old Testament is called the **Age of the Law**. These laws are called the Mosaic Law or the Laws of Moses. So from **Genesis** to the last book in the Old Testament, **Malachi**. Over 600 laws in OT.
- The New Testament, starting from Acts 2. There were 120 in upper room praying and worshipping when the, people encountered the permanent indwelling among the believers at Pentecost. These disciples witness the **birth of the New Testament church**. Jesus commands this expansion of His church:

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and **make disciples**

of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching** them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

So before the end of the age or the 2nd Coming of Christ, Jesus is telling His followers to “Go, **make disciples, baptizing, and teaching them the Word of God**” and the end will come.

Jesus has kept His promise and the church has been growing for 2,000 years. [\[Show the Chart again\]](#) The ***Church Age will end when God’s people are raptured out of the world*** and taken to be with the Lord.

Revelation is the “uncovering” or “unveiling” of the Person, Power and Plan of Jesus Christ. In other words, the **glory of God** will be revealed. And Revelation is a prophetic book, the second coming of Jesus.

When will the end come?

Matthew 24:14

And this gospel of the kingdom will be **proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations**, and **then the end will come.**

When the “Good News” is spread to all nations and to all generations, the end will come. ***What will Jesus look like when He returns?***

Revelation 1:12-16

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw **seven golden lampstands**, **13** and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. **14** The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His **eyes were like a flame of fire**, **15** his **feet were like burnished bronze**, refined in a furnace, and his **voice was like the roar of many waters**. **16** In his right hand he held seven

stars, from his **mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

“**lamp stands**” represent the churches

“**A sharp two-edged sword**”: Hebrews 4:12 tells us what this sharp two-edged sword is.

Hebrews 4:12

For the **word of God** is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart**.

So God is telling us that when Jesus comes again, He will be the **living Word** and “**active, piercing the division of soul and of spirit**.” Meaning, Jesus is coming as the judge to our soul and our spirit.

So God has given to us the Bible as a pre-warning through the Word of God. He is saying, “**Be ready. For I am coming with fire**.” Jesus is not coming back to give us a hug. He is returning as a judge dividing the soul and spirit.

So when Jesus comes there will only be **two types of fire**:

Sanctifying Fire: If we as individuals, or as the Church at large, submit to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit (Obey His Commands and His voice and Walk in His ways or Walk in the Spirit) and “**hear what the Spirit has to say to the churches**,” we will experience the *first* type of fire — a holy fire intended to **purify and to make us more like Christ**. (A Good fire. A sanctifying fire or cleansing fire.)

Second Type of Fire: If we resist (non-repentant, they don't want to change their ways) the pleadings of the Holy Spirit and stubbornly continue to act in ways that are contrary to Christ's character, there is a **second type of fire that burns up chaff and consumes**

everything that stands opposed to God. Bottom line, if you reject God, then there will be an eternal fire or outside of God's presence.

[Note: Chaff is dry, scale-like plant material such as the **protective seed casings** of cereal grains, the scale-like parts of flowers, or finely chopped straw. Chaff cannot be digested by humans, but it may be fed to livestock, ploughed into soil, or burned]

We last finished with Revelations 1:17-18

Revelations 1:17-18

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, **18** and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

Once again, Jesus is the final judge and He holds the key of life and death. But once again, I want to remind people of Jesus' desire. **He wants people to go to heaven with Him.** This is God's great desire.

(Have everyone repeat **John 3:16**)

Revelation 1:19

Write therefore the things that you **have seen**, **those that are** and **those that are to take place after this.**

- The things that you **have seen**: Chapter 1 (Appearance of Jesus)
- "Those **that are**": Chapters 2-3 (The Church Age)
- "Those **that are to take place**": Chapters 4 - 22 (Future Events)

Revelation 1:20

As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the **angels of the seven churches**, and the seven **lampstands are the seven churches.**

So are there "angels" inside the church?

Greek it is **angelos** pronounced **ang'-el-os** means a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God. (a **pastor**: —angel, messenger)

So your pastor is an “angel!” I’ll take that.

The idea is that God is sending us a message to “**through a living person**” (like **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**) who can send a message and not a spiritual being (angel). So in another words, God can speak through a pastor, only if it matches with scripture.

Matthew 11:10

This is he of whom it is written, “Behold, I send my **messenger** before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’

Now we know that this is talking about **John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus.**

So now moving forward, Jesus is going to send a message to the seven churches. Remember, the seven churches represents the literal churches but also all churches throughout history. And there are spiritual implications of these messages.

Letters to 7 Churches (Revelation 2-3)

Literal in Existence: Each church was an actual church located in Turkey during the 1st Century A.D.

Spiritual Relevance for Today: Each church addresses similar spiritual issues relevant to Believers today.

[Show the image of the seven churches in Asia Minor]

Now, if we miss this “spiritual Relevance” then we miss out on **why we became a church in the first place.**

So before I dig into the Church in Ephesus, I want to deal with **Revelation 2:6**:

Revelation 2:6 (To the church in Ephesus)

Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

These Christians hate Nicolaitans and so does Jesus. ***Who are the Nicolaitans and why does God hate their works?***

The name "**Nicolaitans**" is derived from the Greek words "**nikao**," meaning "to conquer" or "to overcome," (English you get the word "Nike" like the word "**Nike Shoes**") and "**laos**," meaning "people." Those who overcome people or those who conquer over people.

There was an issue with "hierarchy" in the church where man stands between man and God. Meaning that a man (human being) would be the bridge between man and God and not Jesus (**John 14:6**). ***In other words, you can only get to the Father through a human being.***

We see this today, where the catholic pope considers himself to be the bridge between man and God. So this was a spiritual form of Nicolaitans. So God is saying that "***you hate the works of Nicolaitans, which I also hate.***" So this is an acknowledgment of the good work that they are doing. You are decreeing the what is truth!

Let's begin to understand about the church in Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1

"To the angel of the church in **Ephesus** write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, ***who walks among the seven golden lampstands.***

Jesus who walks among the lamp stands meaning that **Jesus is walking with the churches**. The idea is that when you trust in the Lord and obey His Words, God walks with you in your journey called faith.

Church in Ephesus: Ephesus was the **capital city of a Roman province in Asia**. The population was around **300 - 500 thousand people**. Ephesus was a **significant center of trade**, located near a harbor at the mouth of the Cayster River in western Asia Minor. Ephesus was known for its **amphitheater, the largest in the world, designed to hold up to 50,000 spectators**. Today, it's just a small Turkish village named Ayasaluk

[The Baltimore Ravens Football stadium (M&T Bank Stadium) can hold 71,008 fans.]

Ephesus was also the location of the **great temple of Artemis** (In Greek), or Diana (The Roman name), built in 550 BC. This temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, was “425 ft. long and 220 ft. wide; each of its 127 pillars which supported the roof of its colonnade was 60 ft. high”

[Show temple image of Artemis or Diana]

Artemis was so popular that it shows up in the book of Acts:

Acts 19:35

And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is **temple keeper of the great Artemis**, and of the **sacred stone that fell from the sky**?

“**Sacred Stone that fell from the sky**”: Muslims also pray towards the Mecca in Saudi Arabia and in Mecca there is a Kaaba which is a cube-shaped shrine, and in the corner of the Kaaba is a black stone. And you have to walk around in a circle around the Kaaba seven times. When you see the black stone, you have to either kiss it, touch it but if your far away, then you have to wave to it and say, “**In the name of God, God is Great.**” Now this same Black Stone came from the sky and they worship it.

The Temple Artemis was a huge popular god and a major tourist attractions across the Roman Empire. **So who is Artemis?**

Artemis or Diana:

- Artemis was the goddess of the moon and the hunt, as well as being the goddess of sex and fertility.
- There were approximately 1,000 male and female prostitutes employed in service at the temple.

Did you know that every time you watch porn, you are actually worshipping the god of Artemis.

For the thousands of tourists who visit there each month, there is a small **Artemis shrine**—a cupped enclosure with a **small female figure** inside. Worshipers were told they could take this shrine anywhere in the world and worship Artemis in front of her tiny shrine, and it would be just good as worshiping her at the Ephesian temple.

But something drastic happened in this great city In the book of Acts 19-20, we learned why Paul spent a great time in Ephesus more than any other place. He was there for two years and some say three years. Ephesus was like ***Las Vegas of the Roman Empire***. It was a place where you can find anything and do anything your flesh wanted. If you got the money, then the whole world was at your hand. ***But light came upon darkness and was forever changed.***

Acts 19:13-22

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure (**command, bind**) you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.” **14** Seven sons of a Jewish **high priest** named Sceva were doing this. **15** But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?” **16** And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. **17** And this became known to **all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks**. And fear fell upon them all,

and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. **18** Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. **19** And a number of those who had **practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.**

And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. **20** So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

Here comes Paul sharing the “Good News” of Jesus and people are being transformed, demon being released, and here comes the non-believers trying to do what Paul does and one demon possessed man beats up seven sons of the high priest.

(V.19): **Something to Consider:** Would you take your most prized possession the one you have that gives them ***great wealth and burned them to the ground?*** Let’s say you have a Phone that is worth a million dollars, and this phone causes you to sin and separate you from God, would you burn it?

That’s what these new believers were doing. These books were with millions today, and yet for the sake of purification and cleansing and making themselves right before Jesus, ***they were willing to destroy those books that caused harm to their soul.***

There was a guy that I knew, who had stacked up very expensive video games. There was this guy I know, who met Christ and fellow in love with Jesus. And one day, while he was playing his video games, he realized that he was spending more time with his video game then he was spending time with God. He said, “***I want to spend more time with Jesus, but I don’t know how?***” So he decided to sell (some) and give away for free most of his games that was worth thousands of dollars. He was willing do it for the sake of getting closer to God. ***This is burning your old nature.***

Now you have the business owners of the video games who are very upset because they have lost a huge customers. Now can you imagine if you started to lose around **20 percent or even 50 percent of your customers** who all decide to get rid of their video games. Can you imagine the loss that this company would have?

And that was exactly like what was going on in Ephesus. A lot of people were no longer buying the “**Little Diana**” shrines and some stopped serving the temple Diana. So you had people who were making the little idols of “dirty Diana” and they were losing money.

Acts 19:25-27

25 These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. **26** And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that **gods made with hands are not gods**. **27** And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute (**Damage to or loss of reputation**) but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

Because of Paul and his message, the people stopped buying his idolatrous shrines. They led a mob to find Paul and, not finding him, grabbed two of Paul’s traveling companions and dragged them to the theater. There the mob continued shouting “**Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!**” (**Acts 19:28**) the praise of Artemis for about two hours (v. 34). Despite the enemy’s intimidations, the church thrived.

This was their first love. Even in the face of intimidation they were willing to believe in Jesus and they were willing to burn there very expensive magic art books. So now in **Revelations it is about 30 years later**. And Jesus says these words to these Christians:

Revelation 2:2-5

2 “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. **3** I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

The church at Ephesus even 30 years later, they held tight to the integrity of the Word of God and ***perseverance in the face of adversity***, But something was lacking with the believers. And here is what Jesus said: **V. 4 & 5**

4 But I have this against you, that ***you have abandoned the love you had at first***. **5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and ***remove your lampstand from its place***, unless you repent

Remember that Jesus is the lampstand, He is the light of the world. “***remove your lamp stand***”: I used to walk with you, but I’m not going to walk with you anymore. Today, you have over 4,000 churches closing it’s doors every year and over 2,000 pastors leaving their ministries each month. This is a very serious matter.

Jesus reveals in verse 4 what He found lacking in the Ephesian church. They have ***abandoned the love that characterized its early history***. What remained was devotion to the truth, but not devotion to Love God.

I see this in a lot of marriages. Where the man and the woman fall in love with each other. Then typically after ***3 to 4 years of marriage the physical love and the affection they have for each other starts to wine down***. Before, they couldn’t wait till they see each other and give each other a kiss, “***I missed you so much honey!***”

Then about **5 to 7 years of marriage then their mental or emotional love for each starts to wine down.** (People get busy with life and kids). We see signs of this, when the women ask her husband about problems that is going on in the house or in any relationship, the man just wants to fix the problem. The man says, “**This is how you deal with that person. Or this is how you fix the problem.**” What we learned was that many women just wanted listening ears and not the men to trying to fix or give solutions to all things.

These are very strong words by Jesus when He is saying, “**4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**” Don’t just fight for the truth but show the truth in love.

What would that “love” look like compared to truth?

Truth: “You should pray to God when you have trials in life.”

Love: “How can I pray with you, when you have trials in life.”

The bottom line was that **The Ephesian church's love for Jesus had grown cold, leaving only obedience to rules and doctrines without love.** Jesus' rebuke needs to be taken seriously today by every church. Sound doctrine and service are important, but they should be grounded in a deep love for Jesus.

So what do you do to get back to the first love?

Revelations 2:5

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent**, and do the works you did at first. If not, **I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place**, unless you repent

So Jesus is telling us to turn around and go back, change our direction (repent), change our mind (remember, the mind controls the body), so change our mind to our first love. Jesus says, “**I will come to you.**” The word “will” here is a promise from God. If you don’t

change and go back to the first “love” God will “remove your lamp stand from its place.” Your church will close, your pastor will leave.

Here are the spiritual principles that Jesus is teaching us now:

So if you have something, doing something, or thinking of something that is hindering you from the presence of God, he is telling us no matter how valuable they may be, burn it for the sake of “Love” of God. And that is how you will go back to the first love.

So the question is ***what is that first love to you?***

Do you remember a time when you fell in love with God? What was my first action in truly showing that I wanted to know more about Jesus? That was the question, I asked myself.

And I remember it very clearly. It was in 1995 in Seoul, Korea. I was living in a boarding house or Ha-sook-jip in Korean, with bunch of other Koreans in a traditional Korean house. There were two rooms in my side and two or three rooms on the other side. Long story short, my Korean friend after getting half drunk said that he was going to go back home and read the Bible. I asked, “***Why are you going back home to read the Bible?***” And He responded, “***Other people have disappointed me and I have disappointed myself, but God and His words have never disappointed me. His Words will always be true, no matter what I do in life.***”

That was the night, where I made a intentional decision to make a “commitment” to read the Bible every day till God calls me home. I accepted Christ when I was 17 years old, but my true first love happened at age 25, when I made that commitment to read and reflect on God’s Word daily. And that was how I met my wife, because of that commitment to God’s Words.

So what is your first love? We’ll come back to pray on this more later.

Revelation 2:7

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who **conquers** I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

Here Jesus is doing two things. **He is giving us an invitation, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** Meaning, Jesus is inviting the individuals in the church to hear what the Holy Spirit says to you and the church, meaning the body of Christ here at NBCC.

“The one who conquerors”: This is from the Greek word *nikōnti*, literally meaning **"one who overcomes."** Meaning, if you overcome your flesh and open your spirit to repentance, then the promise of God is to give you **“to eat of the tree of life.”**

Jesus promises every conqueror the privilege of partaking of the tree of life in God's paradise. The “Tree of Life” goes all the way back to the book of Genesis. So if you listen to God's instructions and obey God's instructions, the promise of God to your life.

Jesus is telling us to go back to our first love so that we can have ears to hear and that we can overcome and eat of the tree of life.

Revelation Chart

