

Revelation Series – “The Letters/Sermons of Jesus”
Chapter 2:1-7 – Letter/Sermon to Ephesus

Revelation 2-3 – Seven Letter/Sermons to Seven Churches

1 – Number 7 – God’s number – “fullness” or “complete” – in other words, these are letters/oracles to seven LITERAL churches in actual places and seven FIGURATIVE churches that span time

2 – “Churches” – remember this is the Greek word, “ekklesia” – best translated, “gatherings, communities” (our “default” is institutional religion when we see word, “church” – these faith communities were far from institutional – they were more movement oriented – organic and dynamic)

3 - In these letters (traditionally called) - Jesus is addressing his people. That’s why they have now become seen by most scholars as what they are – sermons, messages, “oracles” – which would have “prophetic consistency” with the spirit of Biblical prophecy – comfort, challenge, call to repentance, promise of new life, God speaking to the people in their moment in history.

These oracles are primary sources for showing us the challenges and tensions that each of John’s congregations were facing (in addition to the pressure and problems that accompanied being part of the Roman culture).

They also spell out how John (Jesus) is encouraging these congregations to respond.

4 – ***Question – how would Jesus address our gathering? Congregation?***

How would Jesus address you? What would HE see? Point out? Reveal? Challenge?

5 – Each letter/sermon/oracle has a specific format:

- a) Command for John to write – “divine dictation” one scholar noted – “Angels” (heavenly messengers - either human figures, guardian angels, or metaphor for the churches themselves)
- b) Statement of who Jesus is (drawn from chapter 1 – bearing on the issues that are going to be raised). Clarifies who is addressing them, commanding them, confronting them, calling for specific responses, and actually presenting consequences.
- c) Affirmation/Exhortation/Rebuke/Challenges – Jesus knows the challenges each faces and what they have been doing to act on those challenge. This section of each letter includes “pros and cons,” some stronger than others.
- d) Promise for faithfulness – what faithfulness“ looks like to each church.
- e) Decisional challenge to faithfulness – said first couple of weeks, urgency, and decisional character, here it is! There are eternal consequences at play - so, LISTEN UP! This is consistent with Jesus’ gospel teachings (“if you have ears to hear” – many times in gospels)

LET’S continue with some life application...ok?

6 – Now there is a **purpose** behind these letters – Jesus wants to address the condition of the heart – the heart of the 7 churches, in this instance, Ephesus but also of YOUR heart and my heart

SERVANTHOOD_____

LOVE_____

John begins with the church at Ephesus

Ephesus – closest to Patmos; well-known city; major city of trade; because of that, Roman Legions' presence; flourishing and growing Christian community; many of the apostles lived there (Paul for 3 years, Timothy, Luke, etc.); temple of Artemis; fertility rituals, 45K amphitheater

2:1 - "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write"

2:1 - "Write: These are the words of the ONE who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the ONE who walks among the seven golden lampstands...says this..."

Description of Jesus straight from chapter 1

2:2-3 "I know your deeds and your labor, your perseverance (your patience, patient endurance) and that you cannot tolerate evildoers/evil people and that you have put those who call themselves apostles to the test, and they are not, and you have found them to be false and you have perseverance and have endured on account of my name and have not become weary/I know that you're bearing up for the sake of my name and are enduring patiently and that you have not grown weary."

Question - What is the affirmation of Jesus for this church in Ephesus?

2:4 - "But I have this against you, that you have left/lost your first love."

Question what does that mean to you?

Question – how does that happen? How do you lose love? How do you keep it fresh, kindled?

2:5 - Jesus says, "Therefore, remember, remember from where you have fallen...the heights from which you have fallen."

Question - When did you have some spiritual "height" that even today you recall as a precious time?

Rhetorical question - You know how easy it is to have love wane, don't you?

2:5 – "Repent, and do the deeds/things you did at first."

Remember, **any time you see a THEREFORE,** you want to ask what it is there for? "Therefore" is an application and action word

Question - what rekindles lost love?

2:5 – "or else I am coming to you and I will remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent" –

2:6 – "But you have this – you hate (harsh word) the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate."

There is a diversity of opinion about who the Nicolaitans - Irenaeus – “they are followers of a man named, Nicolaus, unrestrained indulgence.” Others believe it to be a reference to Epicureanism philosophy (“eat, drink, be merry, self-indulgence). Another early church leader, Hippolytus, noted they were a PROTO-Gnostic group.

2:7 – “The One who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”

2:7 – “To the one who overcomes, I will grant to eat from the tree of life, which in in the paradise of God”