

LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES, Part 2

REVELATION, #3

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“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive:

“I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death. (Revelation 2:1-11, NLT)

*“God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.”
(Revelation 1:3, NLT)*

IF THE SHOE FITS, WEAR IT.

THE CHURCH IS A GUARDIAN OF CULTURE.

EPHESUS WAS THE MORE PROMINENT CITY OF THE SEVEN AND CENTER OF THE CULT OF ARTEMIS.

“Citizens of Ephesus,” he said. “Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven.” (Acts 19:35, NLT)

MANY FALSE TEACHERS LIVED AND TAUGHT IN EPHESUS.

“I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock.” (Acts 20:29, NLT)

“When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth. Don’t let them waste their time in endless discussion of myths and spiritual pedigrees. These things only lead to meaningless speculations, which don’t help people live a life of faith in God.” (1 Timothy 1:3–4, NLT)

DISCERNMENT WAS WEAK IN THE EPHESIAN CHURCH AT FIRST.

“As you know, everyone from the province of Asia has deserted me—even Phygelus and Hermogenes.” (2 Timothy 1:15, NLT)

REVELATION REVEALS A CHURCH GROWING IN DISCERNMENT.

“You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars.” (Revelation 2:2, NLT)

THE EPHESIAN CHURCH HAD LOST THEIR FIRST LOVE.

“The one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:” (Revelation 2:1, NLT)

1. Walking among the lampstands was the role of the priestly guardians to care and repair.
2. Ephesians had lost the first love of sharing Christ with lost people.

“Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:12–14, NLT)

THE EPHESIANS MUST REGAIN THEIR FIRST LOVE TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE (ETERNAL LIFE).

“While I welcomed in God [your] well-beloved name which ye bear by natural right, [in an upright and virtuous mind], by faith and love in Christ Jesus our Saviour—being imitators of God, and having your hearts kindled in the blood of God...” -*Polycarp to the Ephesians in the early 2nd century church*

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA IS FAITHFUL IN PERSECUTION MUST BE FAITHFUL TO DEATH.

“If you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10, NLT)

“Suffering has a mysterious, unknown component. ... Christ commands us to “Overcome!” in the strength He alone can supply...”
-*Billy Graham, Approaching Hoofbeats*

CONTRASTS

1. FIRST AND THE LAST
2. DEAD BUT IS ALIVE
3. POVERTY BUT RICH
4. THOSE OPPOSING YOU...SAY THEY ARE JEWS BUT THEY ARE NOT
5. FIND LIFE IN THE FACE OF DEATH

JEWISH PEOPLE WERE EXEMPT FROM THE EMPEROR CULT.

JUDEAN REVOLT AD 66-70 RESULTED IN TAX UPON ALL JEWS.

AS A RESULT, CHRISTIANS WERE KICKED OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUES IN SMYRNA AND PHILADELPHIA.

JEWISH ACCUSERS BETRAYED POLYCARP, A DISCIPLE OF JOHN.

ROME DIDN'T GO OUT LOOKING FOR THESE SORTS OF THINGS.

THOSE WHO KICKED THEM OUT WERE CALLED THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN.

THEY WERE ACCUSING THE BRETHREN LIKE SATAN.

IT WAS A JEWISH DEBATE.

THE TEN DAYS OF TESTING MAY BE FIGURATIVE; DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS WERE TESTED FOR 10 DAYS.

- 1. THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA IS ENCOURAGED “DON'T BE AFRAID!”**
- 2. THOSE WHO OVERCOME WILL RECEIVE A CROWN.**
- 3. ALL OF US WILL HAVE TO FACE A TEST.**

The only two churches to receive no rebukes are the two persecuted churches.

“Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12, NLT)

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword:” (Revelation 2:12, NLT)

“I Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you.” (Revelation 2:13, NLT)

“Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” (Revelation 2:16, NLT)

- 1. SATAN'S THRONE - IMPERIAL CULT CITADEL**
- 2. THE TEMPTATION IS TO COMPROMISE.**
- 3. PASSIONATE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WILL FACE OPPOSITION.**

4. BALAAM WAS A PROPHET OF GREED AND SEDUCTION.
5. CAN I RESIST ECONOMIC TEMPTATION?
6. CAN I RESIST SEXUAL TEMPTATION?
7. HIDDEN MANNA IS CHRIST'S PRESENCE

“After all, our ancestors ate manna while they journeyed through the wilderness! The Scriptures say, ‘Moses gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, Moses didn’t give you bread from heaven. My Father did. And now he offers you the true bread from heaven. The true bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Sir,” they said, “give us that bread every day.” Jesus replied, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:31–35, NLT)

8. WHITE STONE WITH A NEW NAME IS REDEMPTION, NEW LIFE, AND THE NAME OF CHRIST.

*“you will be given a new name by the LORD’s own mouth.”
(Isaiah 62:2, NLT)*

“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.” (Revelation 2:17, NLT)

*“No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.”
(Revelation 22:3–4, NLT)*

9. THE CHALLENGE IS EITHER WE INFUSE AND INFLUENCE CULTURE OR WE ABSORB THE CULTURE AROUND US.
10. IF WE PRAY MARANATHA, WE MUST BE PREPARED TO SHARE THE GOSPEL

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA PRAISED AND WARNED.

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze.” (Revelation 2:18, NLT)

“I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.” (Revelation 2:19, NLT)

“But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.” (Revelation 2:20, NLT)

1. WE STILL HAVE SELF DESIGNATED SPIRITUAL LEADERS.

2. WE CAN DISCERN BY:

a. SOUND CHRISTOLOGY

“And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. Anyone who denies the Son doesn’t have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” (1 John 2:22–23, NLT)

“Dear friends, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here. But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world’s viewpoint, and the world listens to them. But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.”

(1 John 4:1–6, NLT)

b. SOUND ETHICS

“And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn’t obey God’s commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. But those who obey God’s word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:3–6, NLT)

c. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

“These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.” (1 John 2:19, NLT)

3. JUDGMENT ON JEZEBEL AND HER DISCIPLES – DEATH – DEPTHS OF SATAN

“Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.” (Revelation 2:22–23, NLT)

4. JESUS IS THE MORNING STAR.

“They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!” (Revelation 2:28, NLT)

