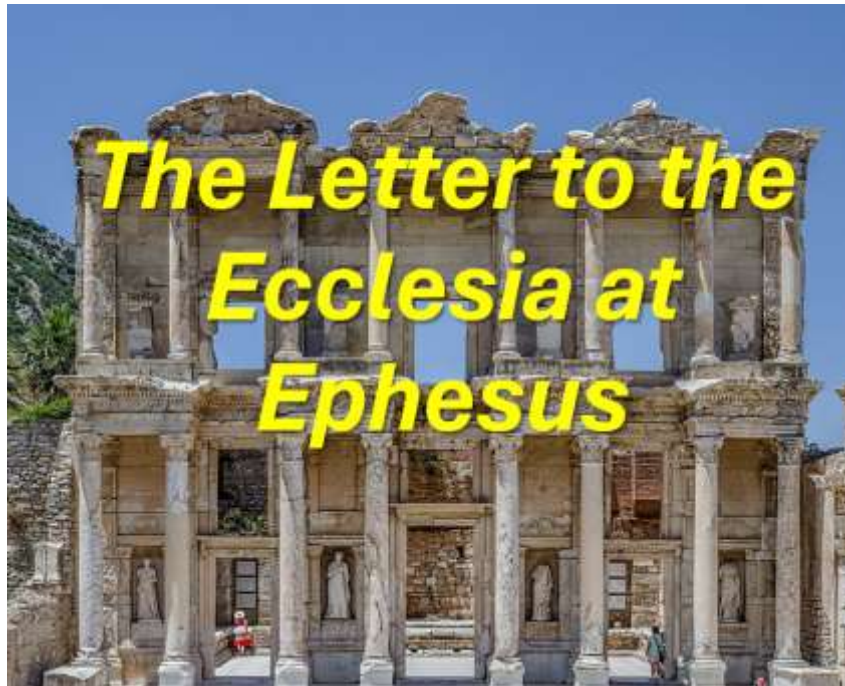


Letter to Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

Additional Points to Bro Derek's Introduction



In the first verse, we are shown that the author of the letter is the same as the one who was in the previous vision holding the seven stars in his hand – which we were reminded represented the messengers of the seven Ecclesias. That

vision was a lesson in how the Lord Jesus, who ascended to heaven to be on the right hand of the Father, was given all power - *the angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.* (1 Peter 3:22)

These letters then sent to the seven Ecclesias in chapters 2 and 3 were dictated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The letters were of great comfort as they confirmed that Jesus was alive and well, and was in control of the situation, and knew what was going on within each Ecclesia, and was concerned about it, and that now here was his priceless advice. In the vision we read in chapter 1 how this man was standing in the middle of the seven lampstands. But here in this first letter, he describes himself as walking around in the lampstands, that is he is active within the Ecclesias – not literally walking of course, - but influencing, listening to prayers, petitioning to the Father, protecting, bringing events to bear, which help transform and help his brothers and sisters.

Ephesus was one of the Gentile cities where one of the earliest Ecclesias were formed after the preaching of the Apostles. From

around AD 52–54, Paul lived in Ephesus, establishing and working with the ecclesia there. The citizens of that city did not make him feel welcome as the teaching of Christianity undermined the pagan beliefs of the people, and so local tradesmen who made and sold statues of Artemis (Latin: Diana) disputed and became angry with him and the ecclesia because of loss of livelihood. (Acts 19:23–41). Paul remained in the city of Ephesus for some time, writing to the Corinthian ecclesia from there. When Paul left the ecclesia he wrote them the letter, which has been preserved to us as the Epistle to the Ephesians. He appointed Timothy to continue there teaching and preaching the gospel.

But we note what Paul said to the elders of the ecclesia at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30: *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Ecclesia of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Well, Paul's prophecy was of course correct – he was Divinely inspired – because the Lord Jesus in this letter observes that those sort of characters had arisen - these grievous wolves, but it seemed Paul's words had not been forgotten, as Jesus said ...*you have tried* (tested) *them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars:* Such work is not easy, as the Lord Jesus knew from experience, as such work requires persistence. It is too easy just to have peace and compromise, and look the other way when members of the ecclesia act in deceitful ways and commit spiritual adultery with other churches, and think that it is alright. It is not alright. Not at all. The Ephesians are commended by Jesus for not tolerating evil. The Apostolic Ecclesia in the last days must be the same.

Such resistance against wolves is tiring work, and it seems that many members of the Ecclesia were getting tired, and Jesus accuses them of leaving their first love. That is the flush of enthusiasm and desire to

serve, the willingness, the fire and motivation gradually evaporated. This is because the spiritual reserves of strength were not replenished through lack of Bible study, or discussions, lack of Bible reading, and meditation of the scripture. Jesus had already previously identified such a situation: Matthew 24:12-13: *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* Like poor old Lot stuck in Sodom, the iniquity of others has a wearing away effect of standards. And as society spirals ever lower in its values, so correspondingly do those trying to maintain standards come under increasing pressure “to stop being so old fashioned”. But the purity of the Doctrine of Christ should never be compromised. Jesus urges the believers in such a weak state to repent. It is dangerous to persist in such a way. *I will remove your lampstand out of his place, except you repent!*

However the Ecclesia at Ephesus did have some things going for them. They were persisting – they were patient, and working hard for the name of Jesus and they *hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes* which Jesus also hated. Who were these Nicolaitanes, and what were their deeds?

Some people say that they were the followers of Nicolas, a Gentile convert to Judaism from Antioch who was appointed as a disciple to look after the affairs on the Ecclesia in Acts 6:5. However there is no evidence of this at all, and Nicolas was a common name at the time. It is more likely that the suggestion by Dr Thomas is the answer, as it fits the context, and we remember that the Revelation being a book of symbol Nicolaitans is more likely to be symbolic than literal. He points out that Nicolaitanes is formed from two Greek words – *nikos* meaning victory, and *laos* meaning people. Thus victory or vanquishers over the people. Their works and doctrines are not specified, and one can only assume. But in line with Pauls warning to the Ecclesia at Ephesus of wolves in sheep’s’ clothing, arising and not sparing the flock but seeking to draw men away after them, is that the horrible tendency in some people to crave to be a leader, and lord it over others, and so

invent a new teaching or interpretation or new ideas to gather shallow admirers and followers – of which the Acts of the Apostles records, and has been evident even in the modern history of the Truth.

Jesus did not intend the letter to the ecclesia at Ephesus to be just for them, and no one else. But it was a general open letter to them first, but then to all other Ecclesias then and subsequently as a warning as he made it quite clear - *He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Ecclesias...*(plural)

Jesus was warning about being careful not to allow these conquerors over the people to succeed, or to follow them. Instead, they were to conquer, to overcome their own personal natural tendencies to sin, and be lazy in the Word, and to avoid complacency. If they did this, and followed the Lord's advice then: *I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

What does this mean, but symbolises the same tree that Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden in the first place because of sin, so they could not partake of this tree and thus have eternal life. So overcoming sin by following the example of Jesus and following his advice means permission to go back to that garden – and it won't just be local area like Eden was, but Eden will fill the whole earth, where the Elohim will walk and talk – saints and angels together with the Lord.

Brother Terry