

REVELATION CLASS 28.03.2024 REVELATION 2 VERSES 1-7 LETTER TO EPHESUS

TO THE ANGEL OF THE EPHESIAN ECCLESIA.

To the Angel of the Ephesian Ecclesia write: These things says he who holds the Seven Stars in his right hand, walking in the midst of the Seven Light-stands, which are golden; I have known your works and thy labor, and your awaiting, and that you are not able to endure wicked men; and have tried them who assert that they are Apostles, but are not, and have found them liars, and you have suffered, and have patient endurance, and you have labored on account of my Name, and have not tired out.

“But I have this against you that you have forsaken your first love. Remember, then, from where you have fallen, and change your mind, and do the first works; but if not, I come to you speedily, and I will remove your light-stand out of its place, except you change your mind.

But you have this that thou hate the works of the Nikolaitanes, which I also do hate. He that hath an ear let him hearken to what the Spirit says to the Ecclesias. To him that overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the Wood of the Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of the Deity”—verse 1–7.

The Ephesian Ecclesia was the Body of Christ in the city of Ephesus. Of the seven cities of Asia (now known as Turkey) this was the most southerly of the seven. This city was the one of the best and most glorious of cities with a magnificent structure formerly dedicated to Diana, the goddess of the Ephesians, but it became a heap of ruins.

The gospel seems to have been introduced into Ephesus by the apostle Paul, (Acts 19) who, on his arrival there, went into the synagogue of the Jews according to his usual practice, and reasoned with them about the Lord Jesus being the Christ. Paul’s Christian friends, Aquila and Priscilla heard a man called Apollos, preaching the doctrine of John the Baptist. He was behind the times, and hearing him preach in the synagogue, they came and taught him the Way of God

more perfectly. He was convinced and he went back to the Jews and powerfully convinced the Jews in public that Jesus was the Christ.

Paul returned, and found there certain disciples who knew only what John the Baptist had taught. They had been immersed upon the faith of the near coming of the Christ; but they did not know that he had come and Jesus of Nazareth was he. Paul having corrected their faith and re-immersed them; and then, having laid his hands upon them, holy spirit came upon them, and the twelve men spoke with tongues, and prophesied, and became a “Star of light” a group of elders able to teach and care for an ecclesia in Ephesus.

This is how the ecclesia in Ephesus began. Being gifted with the power to speak in foreign languages, and to speak to edification, which all could who had the gift of prophesying, is proof sufficient that they became collaborators with Paul in proclaiming the invitation to have a part in the kingdom and glory of God. Paul being strengthened by these, spoke boldly explaining the things concerning the Kingdom of God.” After this, Paul established the disciples into a distinct congregation, and continued his preaching for about two years; so that all that lived in that part Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. The number of the faithful had greatly increased; and many who believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds by burning all their ‘books of magic’ to the value of 50,000 pieces of silver; so the word of God grew mightily, and prevailed.”

1. The Angels of the Ecclesias.

So the One Body was established in Ephesus. It became a lightstand, and the Holy Spirit given by Paul’s laying on of hands, it became a light shining from its Eldership like a star, the members in particular, for the illumination of the surrounding darkness.

It was to this *angel* that the writing was addressed. This word was correctly used for the leadership of an apostolic ecclesia. It did not and does not indicate **one man**, as the churches, teach, for they are

ignorant of the Hope of Israel and are blind leaders of the blind. Churches Catholic or Protestant alike hardly read or study the book of revelation and are no better than the “blind Pharisees”. The Lord Jesus classes them as ‘the Devil and his angels, while the “Revelation, “the Dragon and his Angels;”. The information before us contains what the Spirit says to “the servants of the God;” to them of the party of “Michael and his Angels;” to them who have believed and obeyed the gospel, and are intelligently and faithfully waiting for the kingdom and glory of which it describes this book.

The time came when Paul was moved to go to Jerusalem for the coming Day of Pentecost, so stopping at Miletus, a city and sea port south of Ephesus, he waited for the arrival of the elders of the ecclesia who comprised the Star-Angel of Ephesus to meet him there. In Acts 20:17, this Star-Angel is styled in Greek “*hoi presbuteroi tes ekklesias*”, *the Presbyters, or Elders of the Ecclesia*. When they arrived, he reminded them of what he had done resident with them, “disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of the God.” He also reminded them of the persecutions he had endured, as a result while preaching both to Jews and Gentiles, he “testified the gospel of the grace of the God,” “preaching his kingdom,” and declaring “all God’s counsel and opposing those of Satan’s synagogue” from all which it is evident that Paul’s teaching and course of public ministration were not those of the Angels of Satan’s Synagogue, who have deceived the whole world down to our own day. All these things the Star-angel of Ephesus understood showing their approval of what Paul said, by their overflowing sympathy with him at the parting hour.

He warned the Star angel brothers to “Take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock which the Holy Spirit appointed them as overseers, to shepherd the ecclesia of God, which he purchased with his own blood. Then Paul warned them, “For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock: yea, of your own selves will men stand up speaking perverse

things to draw away disciples after them.” This was the last interview Paul had with the Ephesian brethren, whose “first works” are approved by the Spirit in this apocalyptic epistle. Paul afterwards wrote to them “the Epistle to the Ephesians,” in which he told them that he was then “an ambassador in bonds;” being “the prisoner of the Anointed Jesus for you Gentiles.” The Jews had effected his arrest by the Romans, and eventually he stood before the emperor Nero and was sentenced to lose his life. He was victimized by them because he declared that the Lord Jesus had sent him to the Gentiles—Acts 22:21. For this cause, he styled himself “the Prisoner of the Anointed Jesus for the Gentiles,” whether in Ephesus or elsewhere.

2. False Apostles.

But not long after he had written to the Ecclesia of the Ephesians, the things of which he warned them about began to display themselves. In his second letter to Timothy, in which he says, “This you know, that *all they which be in Asia* are turned away from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. Trusted elders began to teach the Ephesian brothers and sisters ideas that that opposed Paul’s, the very men whom Paul had taught the truth of the gospel of the kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus Christ were being neglected and wrong doctrine was advocated in its place. Paul had been long a prisoner, in Rome, and could no more personally look after the congregations, to encourage the faithful and to restrain the presumptuous, who sought to supersede him, and constitute themselves authorities in his stead. They had become “grievous wolves,” “drawing away disciples after themselves,” and turned away from Paul.” The same thing has happened time and again and the revival of the Bible Truth in these last days has witnessed the fragmentation of the Christadelphian Faith.

However before the members of the Ephesian Ecclesia were utterly abandoned in their own corruption, the Spirit appealed to them

through John in Patmos. The spirit of Christ addressed them as the Ruler who held the Star Angels in his right hand, and walked in the midst of the Golden Light stands. The spirit in the glorified Son of God addressed the elders of the Ephesians saying

“I have known your works, and your labour, and patient waiting, and that you are not able to endure wicked men; and you have tried them who claim they are apostles, but are not, and found them liars; and you have suffered, and have patiently endured; and thou have labored, on account of my Name, and have not tired out.” This was the Spirit’s knowledge of them in relation to the first estate of the elders symbolized by the Star-Angel of the Ephesian ecclesia.

A case of wickedness occurred in that ecclesia of Corinth, in which they were thought to sympathize. Paul wrote in reproving what he had heard. His letter said, “You sorrowed after a godly sort; In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter” The Corinthians rectified the fault.

But another class of men were a serious and fatal trouble to Paul and the ecclesias. They first appear Acts 15:1–5. They had come to believe that *“the belief of the Gospel of the Kingdom, and baptism, **were not sufficient for salvation; but that a Gentile must besides, or in addition to these, be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses.**”* This seditious teaching was directly opposed to the teaching of Paul and the apostles’. These people were known in History as the Ebionites. Their teaching was a denial, that “the blood of Jesus Anointed, Son of God, cleanses from all sin”—1 Jno. 1:7; and that “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree”—1 Pet. 2:24; If salvation could not be attained without circumcision and obedience to Moses, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, were an insufficient sacrifice for sin. The apostles unanimously rejected, this false teaching, and worked very hard to prevent the idea being accepted in the public mind.

Paul understood these pretended apostles thoroughly and calls them, “false brethren who secretly slipped in unnoticed to spy out our liberty.” “They eagerly disturb you,” says he, “but not well. I would that

they were even cut off, which trouble you. They desire to make a fair show in the flesh, therefore they constrain you to be circumcised; but only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." Such was the situation of the Star-Angels of the apostolic ecclesias. **So long as they continued faithful, the congregations flourished** in the midst of persecution; but when men opposed apostolic teaching and authority, affairs began to go wrong. The hidden practicing of lawlessness began to work like leaven until the whole body was leavened with iniquity, and Satan triumphed for a time.

3. The Nikolaitanes.

But though the Ephesian Star-Angel had fallen from his first purity of belief and practice, it had one redeeming characteristic; that is, the "hatred of the works of the Nikolaitanes, which," says the Spirit, "I also hate." The word, *Nikolaitanes*, is used in no other book of the scriptures than this symbolical one in the Apocalypse; and it only occurs twice in ch. 2:6, 15. In the first place it refers to "*the works*" of the Nikolaitanes; and in the second it refers to their "*doctrine*," or teaching which is denounced. The word is a symbolical name, like Balaam and Jezebel, in the same chapter. In the original, it is *Nikolaitan* a word compounded of ***nikos* victory, and *laos* people**; and as a mystical name it signifies *Vanquishers of the People*. This class of men so designated, were the "grievous wolves" Paul predicted would stand up among the *episcopals* (or overseers) of the Presbyteries, and raven upon the flock. Expecting the flock to feed and clothe them. These overseers, by their works, and by their teaching, would so delude and deceive the people, in order to get complete control over them and persuade them, that they were "*the ambassadors of Jesus Christ*," and the true "*successors of the apostles*;" and that it was to them that the congregations should look for the consolations of religion, and the exposition of the sacred writings, which were too holy and too obscure to be interpreted by any save "*the called and sent of God as Aaron was*," which they affirmed

themselves to be! The people, not holding on to their “first love,” that they might be saved, and neglected the study of the word for themselves, were easily beguiled by “the working of Satan with all power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness,” brought to bear upon them. They surrendered themselves to their spiritual guidance, selling themselves to the clergy for their “philosophy and vain deceit”—Col. 2:8. “For this cause, the Almighty sent upon them a strong delusion to their believing in a lie, that all might be condemned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in the unrighteousness”—2 Thess. 2:9–12. Such was the transgression into which they were beguiled by Hymeneus, Philetus, Alexander, Phygellus, Hermogenes, Demas, Diotrephes, and other men of their stamp; and such is the punishment that came upon them to their exclusion from the kingdom of the God. The delusion waxed stronger and stronger, as centuries increased the distance from apostolic times, until now the human mind is so enchained by the clerical system of unrighteousness extant, that the truth has scarcely any influence at all.

But the Judaizers were not alone the perverters and vanquishers of the people. Another faction arose from among the Gentile element of the Star-Angels. This was composed of the “wolves” referred to in Paul’s first letter to Timothy, ch. 6:20, where he says to him, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of *Gnosis*, or knowledge falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” These came to be called *Gnostics* because of their professing what they called *Gnosis*, or knowledge, a false science, whose principals were subversive of the truth. The same thing is styled in our day “theological science,” “divinity,” “ethics,” “hermeneutics”. In our days also, terms are invented to amaze the ignorant, and impress them with the necessity of schools and colleges for the indoctrination of pious youth in the mysteries they learnedly conceal. Now the principles of this ancient and modern *Gnosis* are subversive of the truth; for “some professing them,”

says Paul, “have erred concerning the faith.” He refers to them again in his second letter, (2:16) saying, “Shun profane, vain, babblings; for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their word will eat as a gangrene; of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that *the resurrection is past already*, and overthrow the faith of some.” These Gnostics were a sort of immersed philosophers—Gentile professors of “the wisdom” then current in the world among the admirers of Plato, and other heathen speculators upon the unknown.

The Lord Jesus then promises the faithful believers that as a reward for their faithfulness He would give them access to the Tree (or a better translation is ‘Wood’) of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

It incorporates much of the Middle East, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, to the Persian Gulf on the west, south and east to the Orontes River to the north, then following the Euphrates to the Persian Gulf. On this territory will be established the Kingdom Of God whose sovereignty is destined to rule all nations, peoples, and tribes, inhabiting the land and sea to their utmost bounds.

Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whereas for those who have faithfully served the Lord Jesus will eat of the tree of life in the middle of the Paradise of God

Such, then, are the geographical boundaries of the Paradise of Deity. It belongs to the earth, and is as real, visible, and actual a region, as Britain or America. The literal Paradise, however, differs from these in that its literality is also symbolical and allegorical of things pertaining to that great incorporation of the citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, styled by Daniel and other sacred writers, “the Saints.” Thus its literal river is symbolical of the spirit to be received from the throne, and through the altar Jesus, by the trees of righteousness that come out of the earth by resurrection. Ezekiel’s river is therefore placed among the apocalyptic symbols of Rev. 22:1. So also, his *aitz rav*, or GREAT WOOD, on both sides of his river, is adopted as a symbol by the Spirit in the

same chapter, and there styled “the *xulon* on this side and that side of the river of water of life,” and representative of the aggregate of the saints, each saint being an element of the wood. The leaf of the Ezekiel wood is for healing; as an apocalyptic symbol it is representative of the saints, who are leaves as well as trees of the *xulon of life*, through whom the Spirit breathes “for the healing of the nations,” symbolized by the waters of the Dead Sea.

Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whereas for those who have faithfully served the Lord Jesus will eat of the tree of life in the middle of the Paradise of God. To eat of the wood of the life in the midst of the Paradise of the Deity is to be an unfading leaf—an immortal possessor of the glory, honor, and incorruptibility of the kingdom, which the God of heaven shall set up in the Holy Land. It is to be one of the priests of the Most Holy Portion of the Holy Oblation, to whom it shall be said by the King, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the State”—Matt. 25:34.

Selected and Paraphrased **DHH**