***“Reviewing Revelation”—Chapter 2:1-7, Ephesus***

**With the conclusion of the introductory matters of chapter one, John begins his** **presentation. The seven churches identified in Revelation 1:11 are specifically addressed. Each receives a description of its present condition with a necessary warning and a call to the overcomers to persevere. Of the seven churches, four demonstrate a spirit of compromise—Ephesus (MEANS ‘DESIRED ONE’ OR ‘DARLING’), Pergamum, Thyatira, and Laodicea. The church at Sardis is dead and the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are presented as the faithful churches. Smyrna is the physically persecuted church and Philadelphia is the physically protected church. With two thousand years separating the seven churches of Asia and the modern churches of the world, the question of relevance is critical. What is the relationship between the seven churches mentioned in Revelation and modern churches? For believers of all ages the issue is the same in connection with the Son of Man: forgiveness or judgment. The Lord instructs six of the seven churches that there are both immediate and long-term consequences to their deeds. The threat of immediate discipline for a lack of repentance is given to the churches of Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Laodicea. Equally, each church is also warned about the possible rewards and punishments to be experienced at the Lord’s coming (*parousia*). This indicates that the messages to the seven churches have both a "near" application and a "far" application--both a temporal and an eternal application. The fact that each message ends with the same trademark: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," is compelling. Each church receives a message composed of seven parts: (1) Name of the Church, (2) Title of Christ as sender, (3) Commendation, (4) Concern, (nevertheless), (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), (6) Promise to overcomer, and (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”…. Sixty-three years since the Pentecost, over 100 different churches exist. One would have to wonder why Jesus selected these specific, seven churches.**

**Revelation 1:19, (The Divine Outline), “**Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” **THIS CHAPTER BEGINS THE THINGS WHICH ARE.**

**Revelation 1:20, “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”**

**Revelation 2:1a, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write,"**

1. **WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE CHURCH--#1? Ephesus**
2. **Elements of each of these letters are: local, admonitory to all churches, homiletic (personal), and prophetic. Discuss.**
   1. **Why is the prophetic aspect the most controversial?**
3. **Who is the “angel?” Refer to Revelation 1:20.** To the angel: As discussed under [Revelation 1:20](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:20&t1=en_nas), this angel may be the pastor of the church at Ephesus, or an angel looking in on the workings of the church at Ephesus. In some way, this angel represents this church; but the letter isn't written just to the representative, but to the whole church.
4. **Where is Ephesus?** This was a famous city in the ancient world, with an equally famous church. **Ephesus**: This great city was also world-famous as a religious, cultural, and economic center of the region. Ephesus had the notable temple of Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped with immoral sex. This tremendous temple to Diana in Ephesus was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was supported by 127 pillars, each pillar 60 feet tall, and it was adorned with great sculptures. "The Temple of Artemis was also a major treasury and bank of the ancient world, where merchants, kings, and even cities made deposits, and where their money could be kept safe under the protection of deity." Ephesus was a stronghold of Satan. Here many evil things both superstitious and satanic were practiced. Books containing formula for sorcery and other ungodly and forbidden arts were plentiful in that city."
   1. **Timothy was alleged to be the first bishop of Ephesus;** **see I Timothy 1:3.**
5. **Correlate this “Ephesus” with Paul’s ministry to Ephesus in** [**Acts 19:1**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+19:1&t1=en_nas)**, Acts 10,** [**Acts 20:31**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+20:31&t1=en_nas). Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years).
   1. **See also Acts 18:24-28 and I Timothy 1:3.** Aquilla and Priscilla, with Apollos served there ([Acts 18:24-28](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+18:24-28&t1=en_nas)). Paul's close associate Timothy ([1 Timothy 1:3](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Timothy+1:3&t1=en_nas)) worked in Ephesus. According to strong and consistent historic tradition, the Apostle John also ministered there.

**Revelation 2:1b, “These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;”**

1. **Who is “He?” Refer to Revelation 1:16. He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands**: These images were taken from John's vision of Jesus in Revelation 1. They emphasize the authority of Jesus in the Church (He **holds the seven stars**) and His immediate presence in the Church (He **walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands**).
2. **WHAT IS HIS TITLE**?--**#2** **He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks**
   1. **See John 10:28.**
3. **Discuss the word, “holdeth**.” This is the ancient Greek word *kratein*, and is an emphatic and complete word. Jesus has these churches, and **holds** them securely. The churches belong to Jesus, not to the leaders of the churches or to the people of the churches. *He* **holds** them.
4. **Talk about the candlesticks**. **See John 10:28 and Revelation 1:20.**

**Revelation 2:2-3, “Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; 2I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:3And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.”**

**Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea—EVERYONE SHOULD PROMISE TO SERVE in PERFECT LOVE!**

1. **WHAT IS THE COMMENDATION?--#3** I **know your works**: Jesus looked at His church, and He knew its condition.
   1. **List the Seven Commendations: works, labor, patience, cannot bear them which are evil, tried them which say they are apostles, but are not and found them liars, born and hast patience, hast not fainted.**
   2. **Discuss “patience**.” is the great ancient Greek word *hupomone*, which means "steadfast endurance." In this sense, the church in Ephesus was rock-solid. **You have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary**: Also, the Ephesian church *continued* doing these things without becoming **weary**. They showed a godly perseverance that we should imitate. By all outward appearances, this was a solid church that worked hard, had great outreach, and protected the integrity of the gospel
   3. Talk about “**You cannot bear those who are evil**.” **Compare Paul’s warning in Acts 20:29-31, 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, I Thessalonians 5:20-21** The Ephesian church pursued doctrinal purity. Paul warned the Ephesians in [Acts 20:29-31](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+20:29-31&t1=en_nas): *For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.* **From this commendation of Jesus, we know that the Ephesians took Paul's warning seriously.**
      1. **Review 2 John: 9-10 and 1 John 4:1-3.**

. (4) What Jesus has *against* the church at Ephesus?

**Revelation 2:4, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”**

1. **What is the CONCERN--#4? Nevertheless I have this against you**: Jesus used a sobering word. **You have left your first love**: Despite all the good in the Ephesian church, there is something seriously wrong. They **have left** - not *lost* - their **first love**. They once had a **love** that they don't have anymore. This can be described as "a definite and sad departure." The distinction between *leaving* and *losing* is important. Something can be lost quite by accident, but *leaving* is a deliberate act, though it may not happen suddenly. The distinction between *leaving* and *losing* is important. Something can be lost quite by accident, but *leaving* is a deliberate act, though it may not happen suddenly. Though they had **left** their **first love**, *everything looked great on the outside*. If you would have attended a service of the church at Ephesus, you might have thought, "This is a happening church. They are doing so much, and they really guard the truth."
   1. **Discuss “nevertheless**.” which means "despite all that." Jesus took into full account *all the good* in the Ephesian church, yet *despite all that*, He had something **against** them. **Nevertheless** means that all the *good* in the Ephesian church did not cancel out the *bad* Jesus is about to describe.
   2. **How serious was this problem…”left your first love**?” The problem was serious. Without love, all is vain. No wonder Jesus said, "**Nevertheless I have this against you**." A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold.
      1. **Review Luke 2**:**45-46.** The Ephesian church was a *working* church. Sometimes a focus on *working* for Jesus will eclipse a love relationship with Him. We can put *what we do* for Jesus before *who we are* in Him. We can leave Jesus in the temple, just as the parents of Jesus did ([Luke 2:45-46](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Luke+2:45-46&t1=en_nas)). The Ephesian church was a *doctrinally pure* church. Sometimes a focus on *doctrinal purity* will make a congregation cold, suspicious, and intolerant of diversity. "When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart."

**Revelation 2:5-6, “5Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.6But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”**

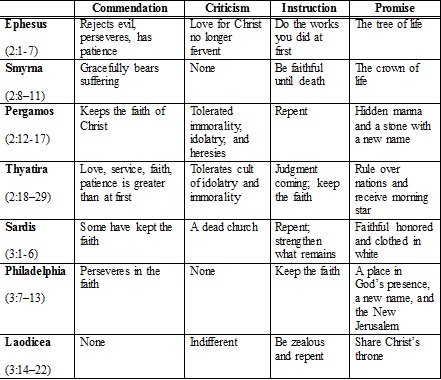
1. **What is the** **EXHORTATION OR ADVICE?--#5** **Remember therefore from where you have fallen**:
   1. **The first step in restoration for the Ephesian church is for them to remember. Discuss.** They need to **remember from where you have fallen**. This means remembering *where they used to be in their love for the Lord and for one another*.
      1. **Review the story of the Prodigal Son was in the pigpen in Luke 16:17-19.** The first step in restoration was remembering what life was like back in his father's home ([Luke 16:17-19](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Luke+16:17-19&t1=en_nas)). This is always the first step in getting back to where we should be with the Lord.
   2. **Talk about the command to** “**Repent**.” This is *not* a command to feel sorry, or really to *feel* anything. It means to change your direction, to go a different way. It is an "urgent appeal for instant change of attitude and conduct, before it is too late."
   3. **What are** **the first works**? Remember how you used to spend time in His Word? Remember how you used to pray? Remember the joy in getting together with other Christians? Remember how excited you were about telling others about Jesus?
   4. **Examine the** “**Or else” promised here—I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place**: Jesus gave them a stern warning. **Unless** they **repent**, He will remove *their light* and *His presence*. When their **lampstand** was removed, they could continue as an organization, but no longer as a true church of Jesus Christ.
      1. **Compare this with the church of *Ichabod*, where the glory had departed, in** [**1 Samuel 4:21**](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Samuel+4:21&t1=en_nas)**.**
   5. **Historically what happened with the Ephesian church?** Apparently, at least in the short term, the Ephesians heeded this warning. In the early second century (not too long after John wrote), Ignatius praised the love and the doctrinal purity of the Ephesians. "You, who are of the most holy Church of the Ephesians, which is so famous and celebrated throughout the world . . . you, being full of the Holy Spirit, do nothing according to the flesh, but all things according to the Spirit. You are complete in Christ Jesus." (*Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, Chapter 8. From the *Ante Nicean Fathers Volume 1*, page 52) from what Ignatius wrote, it seems that the Ephesians returned to their *first love* without compromising doctrinal purity. That isn't always an easy balance to keep, but the Ephesians apparently kept it, at least for a time.
   6. **Who are the Nicolaitians?** **But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitians, which I also hate**: Jesus - probably so the Ephesians would not be overly discouraged - gave this church another compliment. The *doctrine of the Nicolaitians* is also condemned in [Revelation 2:15](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+2:15&t1=en_nas), and in that passage it is related to immorality and idolatry. Irenaeus (writing in the late second century) described what he knew of the Nicolaitians: "The Nicolaitians are the followers of that Nicolas who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John, as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, **and to eat things sacrifice to idols.”** Hippolytus, a student of Irenaeus (writing in the early third century) associated the Nicolaitans with the Gnostics: "There are, however, among the Gnostics diversities of opinion . . . But Nicolaus has been a cause of the wide-spread combination of these wicked men. [He] departed from correct doctrine, and was in the habit of inculcating indifference of both life and food. Perhaps the **Nicolaitans** fulfilled all these aspects, being both an **idolatrous immorality and a presumptuous, hierarchical, and “hidden mysteries" system typical of Gnosticism. We learn that the God of love hates sin, and wants His people to also hate sin.**
      1. **The Nicolaitians wanted separation from clergy and laity. What does that imply?** Others have emphasized the root meanings of the words that make up the name **Nicolaitans**. *Nikao-laos* means literally "to conquer the people." Based on this, some point to presumptuous claims of apostolic authority and to the heart that sets up hierarchies and **separates the "clergy" from the "laity."**
         1. **Contrast with John 3:14 and 16, I Peter 5:3.**

**Revelation 2:7a, “7He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”**

* 1. **What is the last part of this EXHORTATION OR ADVICE? He who has an ear**: This qualifies everyone - or at least everyone who will *listen*. This letter was not only written to the church at Ephesus in the Apostle John's day. It is written to us, and to all Christians throughout the centuries.
  2. **Does this apply to all the churches**? **Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**: Each one of these seven letters apply to all churches. We must hear what the Spirit says **to the churches** - not just to *one church*. These letters - each of them - were meant to speak to *you*, if you will only have an **ear** to **hear what the Spirit says**.

**Revelation 2:7b, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”**

1. **What is THE PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMER--#6? To him who overcomes**: but here Jesus seems to speak of overcoming of their coldness of heart and lack of love marked by leaving their first love.
   1. **I will give to eat from the tree of life**: The promise for these overcomers was a return to Eden, a restoration, and eternal life. This was meant first in the eternal sense of making it to heaven, which was no small promise to a church threatened with the removal of Jesus' presence. It is also meant in the sense of seeing the effects of the curse rolled back in our own lives though walking in Jesus' redeeming love.
   2. **In the midst of the Paradise of God**: Originally, the word **Paradise** meant "a garden of delight." Eventually, it came to mean "the place where God lives." Where God is, that is **Paradise**!
2. **What is the wrap-up from the Church of Ephesus?** The Nicolaitians were known for defiling God by eating of the forbidden idols’ foods, and the promise from Jesus is just the opposite…..believers could eat from the tree of life!
3. **Is this first church, Ephesus, the “Apostolic Church?**” This church was diligent on doctrine, but absent in devotion.



**NOTE ABOUT EPHESUS: Ephesus was called “The Queen of Asia,” and boasted of a perfect harbor. The Temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Ephesus was an important center for** [**Early Christianity**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Christianity) **from the AD 50s, becoming the center for missionary activity throughout Asia. From AD 52–54, the apostle** [**Paul**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle) **lived in Ephesus, working with the congregation and apparently organizing missionary activity into the hinterlands.**[**[40]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-40) **Initially, according to the** [**Acts of the Apostles**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles)**, Paul attended the** [**Jewish synagogue**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_synagogue) **in Ephesus, but after three months he became frustrated with the stubbornness or hardness of heart of some of the Jews, and moved his base to the school of** [**Tyrannus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minor_biblical_figures,_L%E2%80%93Z#Tyrannus) **(**[**Acts 19:9**](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Acts&verse=19:9&src=!)**). The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary reminds readers that the unbelief of "some" (**[**Greek**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language)**: τινες) implies that "others, probably a large number, believed"** [**[41]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-41) **and therefore there must have been a community of** [**Jewish Christians**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Christians) **in Ephesus. Paul introduced about twelve men to the '**[**baptism with the Holy Spirit**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_with_the_Holy_Spirit)**' who had previously only experienced the** [**baptism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism) **of** [**John the Baptist**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist) **(**[**Acts 19:1-7**](http://tools.wmflabs.org/bibleversefinder/?book=Acts&verse=19:1-7&src=!)**), and later became embroiled in a dispute with some artisans whose livelihood depended on selling statuettes of Artemis (**[**Latin**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language)**: *Diana*) in the Temple of Artemis (**[**Acts 19:23–41**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+19%3A23-41&version=9)**). Between 53 and 57 AD Paul wrote the letter** [**1 Corinthians**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Epistle_to_the_Corinthians) **from Ephesus (possibly from the 'Paul tower' near the harbor, where he was imprisoned for a short time). Later, Paul wrote the** [**Epistle to the Ephesians**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_to_the_Ephesians) **while he was in prison in Rome (around 62 AD).**

**Roman Asia was associated with** [**John**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Apostle)**, one of the chief apostles, and the Gospel of John might have been written in Ephesus, *c* 90–100.**[**[43]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-Harris_Gospels-43) **Ephesus was one of the** [**seven cities**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_churches_of_the_Book_of_Revelation) **addressed in the Book of Revelation (**[**Revelation 2:1–7**](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+2%3A1-7&version=KJV)**), indicating that the church at Ephesus was strong.**

**Two decades later, the church at Ephesus was still important enough to be addressed by a letter written by Bishop** [**Ignatius of Antioch**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch) **to the Ephesians in the early 2nd century AD, that begins with, "Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which is at Ephesus, in Asia, deservedly most happy, being blessed in the greatness and fullness of God the Father, and predestinated before the beginning of time, that it should be always for an enduring and unchangeable glory" (*Letter to the Ephesians*). The church at Ephesus had given their support for Ignatius, who was taken to Rome for execution.**

**A legend, which was first mentioned by** [**Epiphanius of Salamis**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiphanius_of_Salamis) **in the 4th century AD, purported that Mary may have spent the last years of her life in Ephesus. The Ephesians derived the argument from John's presence in the city, and Jesus’ instructions to John to take care of Mary after his death. Epiphanius, however, was keen to point out that, while the Bible says John was leaving for Asia, it does not say specifically that Mary went with him. He later stated that she was buried in Jerusalem.**[**[44]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-44) **Since the 19th century, The** [**House of the Virgin Mary**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_the_Virgin_Mary)**, about 7 km (4 mi) from Selçuk, has been considered to have been the last home of** [**Mary, mother of Jesus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary,_mother_of_Jesus) **in the Roman Catholic tradition, based on the visions of Sister** [**Anne Catherine Emmerich**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Catherine_Emmerich)**. It is a popular place of Catholic pilgrimage which has been visited by three recent popes.**

**The** [**Church of Mary**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_Mary) **near the harbor of Ephesus was the setting for the** [**Third Ecumenical Council**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Council_of_Ephesus) **in 431, which resulted in the condemnation of** [**Nestorius**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nestorius)**. A** [**Second Council of Ephesus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Council_of_Ephesus) **was held in 449, but its controversial acts were never approved by the Catholics. It came to be called the Robber Council of Ephesus or Robber Synod of Latrocinium by its opponents.**

**Ephesus (**[**/ˈɛfəsəs/**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English)**;**[**[1]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-Olausson2006-1)[**Greek**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language)**: Ἔφεσος *Ephesos*;** [**Turkish**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_language)**: *Efes*; ultimately from** [**Hittite**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hittite_language) ***Apasa*) was an** [**ancient Greek**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece) **city**[**[2]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-Gagarin2010-2)[**[3]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-Ramirez-Faria2007-3) **on the coast of** [**Ionia**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionia)**, three kilometres southwest of present-day** [**Selçuk**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sel%C3%A7uk) **in** [**İzmir Province**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0zmir_Province)**,** [**Turkey**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkey)**. It was built in the 10th century BC on the site of the former** [**Arzawan**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arzawa) **capital by** [**Attic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attica) **and** [**Ionian**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionians) **Greek colonists. During the** [**Classical Greek**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Greece) **era it was one of the twelve cities of the** [**Ionian League**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ionian_League)**. The city flourished after it came under the control of the** [**Roman Republic**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic) **in 129 BC. According to estimates, Ephesus had a population of 33,600 to 56,000 people in the Roman period, making it the third largest city of Roman** [**Asia Minor**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia) **after** [**Sardis**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sardis) **and** [**Alexandria Troas**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria_Troas)**.**[**[6]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-hans252to257-6)

**The city was famed for the** [**Temple of Artemis**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Artemis) **(completed around 550 BC), one of the** [**Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Wonders_of_the_Ancient_World)**. In 268 AD, the Temple was destroyed or damaged in a raid by the** [**Goths**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goths)**.**[**[7]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-7) **It may have been rebuilt or repaired but this is uncertain, as its later history is not clear.**[**[8]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-8) **Emperor** [**Constantine the Great**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great) **rebuilt much of the city and erected new public baths. Following the** [**Edict of Thessalonica**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Thessalonica) **from Emperor** [**Theodosius I**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodosius_I)**, what remained of the temple was destroyed in 401 AD by a mob led by St.** [**John Chrysostom**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chrysostom)**.**[**[9]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-9) **The town was partially destroyed by an earthquake in 614 AD. The city's importance as a commercial center declined as the harbor was slowly silted up by the** [**Küçükmenderes River**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/K%C3%BC%C3%A7%C3%BCkmenderes_River)**.**

**Ephesus was one of the** [**seven churches of Asia**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_churches_of_Asia) **that are cited in the** [**Book of Revelation**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Revelation)**.**[**[10]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-10) **The** [**Gospel of John**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John) **may have been written here.**[**[11]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephesus#cite_note-Harris-11) **The city was the site of several 5th century Christian Councils (see** [**Council of Ephesus**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ephesus_(disambiguation))**). It is also the site of a large** [**gladiators**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gladiator)**' graveyard. The** [**ruins**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruins) **of Ephesus are a favorite international and local tourist attraction, partly owing to their easy access from** [**Adnan Menderes Airport**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adnan_Menderes_Airport)**.**

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| **THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION, Chapters 2 & 3** | | | | | | | |
|  | **Christ** | **Commendation** | **Rebuke** | **Exhortation** | **Alternative** | **Promise** | **Historical**  **View** |
| ***Ephesus***  ***(2:1-7)*** | Holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks (1:20). | Works, labor, patience, cannot bear those who are evil, judged the false apostles, and hates the deeds of the NicolaiIItans. | Left their first love. | Remember, repent, do the first works. | I will come quickly and remove the candlestick out of his place (1:20) | Will eat of the Tree of Life. | The Church of the first century. |
| ***Smyrna***  ***(2:8-11)*** | First and the Last, Who was dead and is alive. | Works, tribulation, poverty. | — | Fear not, be faithful unto death. | — | Will receive the Crown of Life, Will not be hurt of the second death. | The persecuted church of the second and third centuries. |
| ***Pergamos***  ***(2:12-17)*** | Has the sharp sword with two edges (Heb. 4:12) | Works, Hold fast Jesus’ name, have not denied the faith. | Hold the doctrine of Balaam. Hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. | Repent | I will come quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. | Will eat of the hidden manna, and receive a white stone with a new name written within it. | The Church from about 312 (Constantine) to about 500 A.D. |
| ***Thyatira***  ***(2:18-29)*** | Eyes like flame of fire, feet like fine brass. | Works, charity, service, faith, growth in works. | Tolerated false prophet, Jezebel, to teach immorality and idolatry. | Repent, hold fast to that which you already have until I come. | Great tribulation, children will be killed. | Will give power over the nations, will receive the Morning Star. | The Church of the Dark Ages till the 16th century. |
| ***Sardis***  ***(3:1-6)*** | Has seven spirits and seven stars. | Works, a name (reputation) of being alive… | …but are dead. | Be watchful, strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. Remember how you have received and heard, hold fast, repent. | I will come on you as a thief. | Will be clothed in white raiment. Name will not be blotted out of the Book of Life. Jesus will confess his name before the Father. | The Church of the Renaissance and the Reformation. |
| ***Philadelphia***  ***(3:7-13)*** | True has the key of David. | Works, has kept Jesus’ word and not denied His Name. Has kept the word of His patience | — | Hold fast that which you have… | …That no man take thy crown. | Be kept from the hour of temptation. Be made a pillar in the temple of God in the New Jerusalem. Jesus’ new name will be written on him. | The Church of the revival of the 19th century. |
| ***Laodicea***  ***(3:14-22*** | The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning (originating source) of the creation of God | — | Lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. Wretched and miserable, and poor, and naked. | Buy from Jesus refined gold white clothes, and eye salve. Be zealous and repent. | I will spew you out of my mouth. | Fellowship with Christ – I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me. | The end-times lukewarm church. |

Comments: All churches begin with a description of Jesus. All but the church of Laodicea receive some sort of commendation. All receive a rebuke of some kind and are told to repent except for Smyrna and Philadelphia. All are offered gracious options if they obey the exhortations.

**THE NICOLAITANS--The exact origin of the NicolaiIItans is unclear. Some Bible commentators believe they were a heretical sect who followed the teachings of Nicolas—whose name means “one who conquers the people”—who was possibly one of the deacons of the early church mentioned in** [**Acts 6:5**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%206.5)**. It is possible that Nicolas became an apostate, denying the true faith and became part of a group holding "the doctrine of Balaam," who taught Israel "to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." Clement of Alexandria says, “They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.” Their teaching perverted grace and replaced liberty with license.  
  
Other commentators believe that these Nicolaitans were not so called from any man, but from the Greek word *Nicolah*, meaning "let us eat," as they often encouraged each other to eat things offered to idols. Whichever theory is true, it is certain that the deeds of the Nicolaitans were an abomination to Christ. They, like the Gnostics and other false teachers, abused the doctrine of grace and tried to introduce licentiousness in its place (**[**2 Peter 2:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Pet%202.15)**,** [**19**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Peter%202.19)**;** [**Jude 1:4**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jude%201.4)**).   
  
Jesus commends the church of Ephesus for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans as He does (**[**Revelation 2:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%202.6)**). No doubt the leaders of the Ephesian church protected their flock from these destructive heresies and kept their people from committing the same evil deeds. All sin is hateful to Christ, as it should be to His followers, as we hate men’s evil deeds, not the men themselves. For the church at Pergamos, Jesus had not commendation, but censure. Unlike the Ephesians, they actually embraced the teachings of the Nicolaitans (**[**Revelation 2:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%202.15)**). Jesus warns them that unless they repent, they are in danger of the judgment that is sure to fall on those who teach false doctrine, attack His church, and destroy His people. The sword of judgment is poised over their heads, and His patience is not limitless (**[**Revelation 2:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%202.16)**;** [**19:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Revelation%2019.15)**).   
  
The lesson for us is that the church of the Lord Jesus throughout the ages has been plagued by those of the Nicolaitan spirit. The only way to recognize false teaching is to be intimately familiar with truth through the diligent study of the Word of God.**

***And, here are the promises:***

**Revelation 2:7b, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”**