

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 15TH-16TH, 2018 // REVELATION 2:1-29

EPHESUS: YOUR FIRST LOVE (REV 2:1-7)

"I KNOW..."

Each letter has "I know" before the evaluation ensues. This shows that no matter how "religious" of a facade we create, **nothing is hidden from the eyes of God.**

THE APPROVAL OF THE EPHESIANS

They were busy doing good things for the community, they persevered in their faith, and rejected false teachers.

"...HATE THE PRACTICE OF THE NICOLAITANS"

This is more than likely referring to a Christian that went heretical named Nicolaus of Antioch. This was a group of "Christians" that believed in unrestrained indulgence and worshiping idols.

- Think of how many cults have sprung up claiming Christ as their Savior.

SO, WORKS DO MATTER.

We seem to shy away from quantifiable evidence of our faith, but here we clearly see that what we do matters greatly to God!

- Not only community service and hard work, but also testing teachers and not tolerating "evil people" are praised by Jesus. **Revelation will affirm us to back up our beliefs with action!**

THE ACCUSATION OF THE EPHESIANS

Jesus says that the church at Ephesus had "abandoned the love you had at first." This is not their love for Jesus, but their love for each other. The faults of other people caused them to be cynical and skeptical of people.

- **Christians are marked by their love for others, but their deeds had become obligations rather than acts of love.**

THE ADVICE TO THE EPHESIANS

Jesus advises them to "Remember how far they've fallen; repent, and do the works [they] did at first." Obviously, Christ considered improper motive to be a sin that needed forgiveness.

- **We need to periodically step back and ask ourselves "why?" Why are we here right now? What drives us?**

THE APPEAL

If they choose to listen to Jesus, they will have "the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God," but if they refuse to change, their "lampstand" will be taken from them.

- Tragically, the Ephesian church ultimately didn't change and neither the church nor city exist today.

SMYRNA: DON'T GIVE UP! (REV 2:8-11)

THE APPROVAL OF THE SMYRNA CHURCH

This is the shortest of all 7 letters. Jesus commends Smyrna for their endurance during "affliction and poverty." Though they may look poor to the world, Jesus says they "are rich."

- The slandering from the "synagogue of Satan" was the Jews that thought they were doing God's work, but were actually acting like Satan.

THERE IS NO ACCUSATION FOR SMYRNA

Of the 7 churches, only Philadelphia and Smyrna escape criticism.

"DON'T BE AFRAID"

The Christians in Smyrna were about to suffer more persecution, but Jesus tells them to not be afraid. The persecution will come in short spurts (10 days) but will also extend into being martyred.

"BE FAITHFUL" AND DON'T GIVE UP

The suffering of the Smyrnan Christians will refine them and show that the great inheritance of the "crown of life" is not just given to anyone, but to the faithful followers of Jesus.

- Though Christians will experience the 1st death, **if we are faithful we will escape the 2nd death; eternal damnation.**

PERGAMUM: HOLD ONTO THE TRUTH (REV 2:12-17)

PERGAMUM WAS THE CAPITAL OF ASIA MINOR

Jesus opens this letter with a reminder of His "sharp double-edged sword" that comes out of His mouth. He did this because Pergamum had fallen prey to false teaching and heresy.

- **False teaching creates enemies within the church.** God will take this offense very seriously and deal with it with His "sword" (word).

THE APPROVAL OF PERGAMUM

Jesus mentions the presence of Satan twice, specifically to his throne being in Pergamum. This is probably a reference to the huge altar to Zeus that overlooked the city.

- The Christians there never wavered from their faith, some even gave their lives (Antipas).

THE ACCUSATION OF PERGAMUM

Though they had remained Christians, some false "teaching of Balaam" had crept in and people that believed heretical teachings of the Nicolaitans had been accepted.

- This included a **subtle inclusion of other religions, lack of sexual boundaries, and a violation of conviction/conscience.**

REFUSING TO LISTEN IS A SIN

Sexual immorality and universalism are clear to the church (though often ignored), but what about a violation of conscience and conviction?

- This means **God will sometimes ask us personally to do things that don't apply to everyone else. We're to be obedient to God's instruction.**

THE ADVICE AND APPEAL TO PERGAMUM

The advice is to simply repent. If they would humble themselves, they'd receive "hidden manna," a reference to the ark of the covenant, and receive a "white stone," symbolic of an admission ticket.

- If they refused, **God would "fight against them." God is quick to forgive, but ultimately He resists the proud (Jn. 4:6).**

THYATIRA: RESIST TEMPTATION (REV 2:18-29)

THE LONGEST LETTER TO THE SMALLEST CHURCH

Jesus tells the church in Thyatira that He is the "one whose eyes are like fiery flames," meaning there is anger in His eyes and that He knows all (omniscient). We're also reminded of His omnipotence because His feet are like "fine bronze."

THE APPROVAL OF THYATIRA

Jesus commends this church for their "love, faithfulness, service, and endurance" and that their "last works are greater than the first."

- This meant that they were growing spiritually and doing good works for others. Also, they had good motives.

THE ACCUSATION OF THYATIRA

The success of Thyatira was overshadowed by their tolerance of "the woman Jezebel."

- Jezebel is from 1 Kings. She was an evil woman that promoted worshiping other gods and deliberately led people into sexual sin.

THE TWO DEFINITIVE ARGUMENTS FOR THE CHURCH

"Jezebel" in Thyatira was either another false prophet or the acceptance of false teaching. Whoever the "Jezebel" in Thyatira was, they were **convincing the church to fit in with the unchristian society around them.**

- Thyatira was being accepting of **open sexuality and universalism in the name of tolerance.**

THERE WAS ALSO DABBING IN THE OCCULT

Paul said that food sacrificed to idols doesn't hurt the mature Christian. In Thyatira the problem was people were dabbling in the occult by eating food sacrificed to false gods.

- **How much of our culture flirts with the overtly occult? What about the music, movies, and shows we watch?**

THE ADVICE AND APPEAL ARE STERN!

Like Jezebel, Thyatira was given the chance to repent. God sternly says if "Jezebel" doesn't, she will be thrown "into great affliction" and "I will strike her children (followers) dead."

- The tolerance of evil must be repented for and we must let go of unbiblical teaching.

YOU MUST HOLD ON!

Thyatira was encouraged to go back to the truth and hold onto it. If they do, they'll have "authority over the nations" and they will receive the "morning star."

- The main point prevails: **hold onto the truth until we die or He comes back.**

AN HONEST EVALUATION / RECEIVE THE MORNING STAR

If we carry the title "Christian," are we proactively working to live according to His teachings? Do our works support what we claim to be? Have we let unbiblical theology creep into the church and our personal lives? Have we betrayed our conscience? Have we given into the temptations of the world? We must understand that our faith will draw negative attention to us. Will we buckle to the pressure? When we make mistakes, will we be humble, repent, and change our ways? Do you know that you're not alone in this fight? We have an Advocate. Do we understand the rewards of endurance?