

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 4TH, 2024 // REVELATION

## EPHESUS (REVELATION 2:1-7)

### THE LETTER

This letter, like the others we will read, shares 5 common traits. These traits will help us understand the letters better.

- A characteristic of Jesus; An encouragement to the church; A criticism of the church; A command to obey; A promise that Jesus makes

### HE KNOWS

Jesus is among the lampstands, or the churches. He addresses the "angel" of the churches; this could be a literal angel or likely the pastor/leader. He's not far away. He is near to His church.

- **He knows our victory. He knows our failure. He knows our struggles. He sees through our religious masks.**

### FALSE TEACHING

It was common for many "teachers" to mislead Believers through rhetoric and desire, including Judaizers, Nicolaitans, and false prophets. Ephesus' location on a major trade route left it open to this type of manipulation, specifically the Nicolaitans, who taught Christian hedonism or Jesus + self-indulgence.

### THE CRITIQUE

They "abandoned the love [they] had at first." This is not a Salvation issue. It is a heart issue. This church had lost its passion for one another. It had become wrapped up in keeping the rules of religion instead of loving people like Jesus, making them jaded.

- **We cannot abandon people.**

### LOVE FOR OTHERS

Loving one another is a character trait of the Church. It is part of the DNA of a Jesus follower (John 13:35). Our passion for Christ must be demonstrated through a ridiculous, outrageous, uninhibited, and respectful love for other people. The Ephesians were playing defense too often.

### REMEMBER

Jesus encourages this church to remember where they came from; to humble themselves, to love the unlovable, because they were once unlovable too (1 John 4:19).

- **What would happen if we expect Jesus to use us to love people before they love us back?**

### THE COMMAND

Jesus tells this church to repent and to do the works they did at first. **To lose a passion and love for people is to lose a passion and love for Christ.**

- **They were judgmental and defensive. Self-examination was needed. Hurtful things happen, but they should not be the reason we stop loving others.**

### THE PROMISE

Christians get hurt a lot. We often are the first to be taken advantage of, or hurt by someone else's actions. It's because we get involved in people's lives. News flash—humanity is messy.

- **Jesus reminds conquerors of the "why" behind "what" we do. It's for Him, and He promises eternity with Him (v. 7).**

## SMYRNA (REVELATION 2:8-11)

### FIRST AND LAST

The church in Smyrna is immediately reminded of Jesus' power over death and His authority to give life. He reminds them of His resurrection. Jesus has no critique for this church.

- **This church was under heavy spiritual warfare and intense persecution, and it was going to get worse.**

### SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

"Jews" spread slanderous rumors against the Christians. With Rome over their shoulder and "Jews" against them, it made life nearly unbearable for the Christians. Jesus is not surprised. We shouldn't be either.

- **Jesus prepares this church for more persecution and possibility of death.**

### THE PROMISE: CROWN OF LIFE

This is encouragement from the Lord to remain faithful to the end, to be courageous in the midst of death. He says they will receive the crown of life, which is referenced in James 1:12. It is given to those who "endure trials."

- **Jesus says He will honor those who endure trial and persecution.**

### SECOND DEATH

This is not referring to the death that we all will experience, the first death. The second death refers to eternal separation from God. Jesus promises the faithful follower that the second death will never harm them.

- **Jesus offers assurance to Smyrna for their faith in Him to the end.**

### OUR PROMISE

His promise still stands. For the Believer, death is not a fearful experience. We are overcomers; conquerors in Christ. We have a hope beyond this world.

- **Just as the Smyrna church was encouraged with the hope of eternity we also must take heart in the promise of Jesus.**

## PERGAMUM (REVELATION 2:12-17)

### THE ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus says this church was holding on to faith even in the face of death, persecution, and idol worship. They did not deny their faith in Jesus.

- **Pergamum was a city where Caesar was worshipped as a god. Therefore, the statement "Jesus is Lord" was politically/religiously controversial.**

### DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

This is why Jesus reminds the church that He is truth and holds all authority and power. **Learning the character of Jesus sustains us during the trial.**

- **The situation was so intense that a follower of Jesus was already martyred (Antipas) when this letter was written.**

## THE CRITIQUE

False teachers invaded the church, specifically teachers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. In the old testament (Numbers 22-25) Balaam, in tandem with Balak, instructed a group of people known as the Moabites to seduce the Israelites and have a more relaxed view of God's commands. This led to sin.

### THE COMMAND

A lot is going on in this church: persecution, death, and false teaching. Jesus says that they held onto His name. Yet, some had held to false doctrine. Jesus commands repentance.

- **False teaching must be dealt with "quickly." If there is no change, the teacher must be removed.**

### THE PROMISE: "HIDDEN MANNA"

This is a symbol Jews would understand, manna which came from God. Moses had Aaron set some manna aside to be enjoyed once more together with the coming Messiah (Exodus 16).

- **This promise symbolizes to the Jews that the conqueror will enjoy the presence of Messiah (Jesus) forever.**

### THE PROMISE: "WHITE STONE"

This is the same promise of eternal life. It is a symbol that Gentiles would understand. In ancient times a white stone had many uses. One use was to signify an admission ticket to an event, play, or festival.

- **The conqueror will receive admission into Jesus' presence forever.**

## THYATIRA (REVELATION 2:18-29)

### FIERY FLAME AND BRONZE FEET

Jesus displays anger and authority with this church. His eyes burn as He walks among this church. He sees their actions and does not like where they are headed.

- **This church received the harshest rebuke. It is the longest of the letters and the most intense.**

### THE ENCOURAGEMENT

Jesus recognized this church was faithful, loving, and service-oriented. They also were a church that was progressing; "[Their] last works are greater than the first" (v. 19).

- **Jesus sees their growth. He acknowledges that they have been moving forward in their faith.**

### THE CRITIQUE

Sexual immorality is personified by the woman Jezebel. In the Old Testament, in 1 Kings, there was an adulterous queen named Jezebel. This could be a literal woman in Thyatira or simply a nickname given to her. Either way, this individual or attitude was influencing the church negatively.

### TOLERATING FALSE TEACHING

Much like Pergamum, Thyatira tolerated false teaching, and Jesus commanded repentance. Thyatira was given time to repent and now was dealing with the consequence of sin (v. 22).

- **Many today are replacing truth with feelings. In the name of "love" we tolerate false teaching.**

### TOLERATING SIN

The Jezebel teaching led to living in sin. The church was looking like the world around them instead of like Jesus. It was causing many to be deceived and caught up in unnecessary affliction.

- **They tolerated sin too long and compromised truth by participating in idol worship and sexual immorality.**

### THE COMMAND

Jesus says some held on to His name. Others let the culture around them creep into their life. Temptation was starting to change them instead of truth changing them.

- **There are consequences in vs. 22-23. We need to get serious about our sin and be open to repentance.**
- Others Jesus simply told to hold on until He comes. These are the ones who didn't know the "secrets of Satan" —who didn't justify their sin so they may know the "depth of sin" to prove the powerful grace of God.
- **This idea to "sin more so grace abounds" is refuted by Paul in Romans 6.**

### THE PROMISE

Conquerors are given authority over the nations. Verse 27 references Psalm 2; Jesus promises those who hold on will inherit eternity and rule with Him.

- **Seeing Believers compromise their faith would be jarring, like they are losing. Jesus assures them of the authority they share through Him.**
- Conquerors are given the morning star in verse 28. This is a highly debated symbol, meaning it is not very clear what Jesus means. What seems most agreed upon is that Jesus promises Himself—He is the morning star (Revelation 22:16 and Numbers 24:17).
- **Conquerors get to be with Jesus!**

### HE KNOWS

- Jesus knows us.
- He knows our struggle and pain. He understands it, and He rewards it. None of it is unseen or wasted.
- He is the one who examines hearts and minds of the church.
- **He knows we overcome. Do we live like conquerors or the conquered?**

### TOLERANCE

- **In the name of tolerance, have we become treacherous?** We must repent for compromising our faith and losing our sensitivity to evil. We cannot grow cold toward others. We are the light.
- **The double-edged sword cuts my heart; it combats the sin in me. We remain true when we are changed by truth.**

### CONQUERORS

- Are we ready to embrace victory?
- Victory is better when we share the win.
- **We cannot abandon people.** Being ready is **preparing ourselves and others for Jesus' return.**
- What would it look like to see Jesus rescue someone's life right in front of us? I dare you to find out.