

# The book of Revelation

**2:1-7**

Welcome to the weekly verse by verse bible study in the book of Revelation. Make sure you pray before you start this, or any bible study.

Last week we made it through the first chapter of the book of Revelation, and this week we will get started in chapter 2 with the letters to the seven churches. As we get into reading about these churches, you must remember that these were actual churches, but not church buildings as we would think of today. Back then, believers had to either meet in halls, or in people's homes, or wherever they could to study God's word and minister to others. So when we read these letters, we can't think on the terms of a church building like we have today, but rather a congregation of people in homes and halls and even in open fields.

Also when we study these letters to the seven churches, we will look a little at the churches, but more so we will look at our own lives and see if we can relate to any, or even all of these churches. After all, isn't that why we study the bible, so that we can look into our own lives, to be more like Jesus!

When these seven letters were sent to the seven churches, they also included the letters to the other churches, as well as the entire book of Revelation (as one big letter). That way the churches could read the message that Jesus had for them, as well as the message that Jesus had for the other churches, and what was going to happen in the future.

It will take us seven weeks to get through these seven letters, as we will spend each week on each church. So let's get started with the first letter to the church in Ephesus.

✉ **Rev 2:1-3** *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,*

*'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.'*

A little about Ephesus. When this letter was written, about 2,000 years ago, Ephesus had a population of around 225,000 and it contained the temple of Diana, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Here people would come to buy their carved images and worship false gods.

In verse one, Jesus tells who the letter is written to and Who is writing this letter to them.

✉ *To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*

We know that Jesus is writing this to the church, because He is the One “*who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*” And if we go back to chapter one, we can read what Jesus is talking about here in regards to “*the seven stars in His right hand*” and “*the seven golden lampstands.*”

† **Rev 1:20** *The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

With Ephesus being one of the main churches, Jesus reminds them that even though they are a big church, that He (Jesus) is still in charge. The Church in Ephesus was John’s church, or should I say it was where John spent his last days. It was here that John wrote his gospel (The gospel of John), the three epistles (I, II & III John) and this book (The book of Revelation). Because of John’s old age at this time, he was not the head of the church, but must have been a dominating influence among the pastors.

Also when you read “*To the angel of the church*” this is referring to the pastor of the church. So it would be like Jesus was writing a letter to the church that you go to, and it being addressed to your pastor.

Jesus then goes on to tell them the good things they are doing.

✉ *I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.*

Reading these things, it sounds like they are a right on church. We read these things and wonder if we are like this, because Jesus is commending them for these things that they are doing, and we all want Jesus to accept the good things that we do.

Here in Ephesus:

- ☺ The people in the church were hard workers: *your labor.*
- ☺ They were patient with others: *your patience.*
- ☺ Abhorred or hated the evil that was going on around them: *that you cannot bear those who are evil.*
- ☺ Checked out what they were being taught: *you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;*

- ☹ And they did it all in the name of Jesus and didn't get tired of doing so: *you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.*

A lot of good things that we all want to do and we even get upset with ourselves if we are not. So reading these things you would wonder what this church had to worry about? After all, they were ministering to those in need in their community and were checking out God's word. But then we are looking at things under our point of view, and not God's, as we will now read that one word that brings chills to your bones "*Nevertheless*".

✎ **Rev 2:4-5** *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.*

As one of the main churches, Ephesus was to be an example to others, and on the outside they looked like they were a good example. But it seems that all their work was for nothing, because they didn't do it out of love. And so many churches think that they are the church of Philadelphia, when in fact they are the church of Ephesus, because they are so busy, yet they don't have time for Jesus.

Along with these weekly bible studies, I also write Daily Devotionals called "5 x 5 w/God", and I wrote a devotional about this very thing. So if I may, I will share it with you.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Luke 10:40**

*But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.'*

Some churches put so much emphasis on serving, that they don't understand why people don't. I know that sounds kind of strange, after all, shouldn't we all be serving in the church? You may be surprised by my answer, but I would say the answer is Yes and No.

Let me explain my answer a little better. We should all be tithing, and going to church each week, and talking with one another and encouraging and praying for one another in the church. But there are also things outside of the church that people should be doing. After all didn't Paul say, "*Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.*" **1 Corinthians 12:29-31**

And the answer to Paul's question is No, because not everyone is a teacher of God's word and not all have the gift of healing, not everyone speaks in tongues, and so on. So not everyone has to have a so called ministry in the church itself (I'm talking building here) But everyone, and I do mean Everyone, should be doing something for the Kingdom of God, but that does not mean everyone should be doing something in the church (building).

Think of Evangelists, they go outside of the church (building) and share Jesus. And those with the gift of healing, they do not have a room or office in the church that has a sign saying, "**Healing Room**". No, those with the gift of healing will pray for those in the church, but also for those outside the church as well.

But some churches puts so much emphasis on serving in the church, that they put less effort in teaching those in the church, or teaching other messages besides serving in the church. Let's take today's verse as an example. Jesus was in the house of Mary and her sister Martha. And Martha was an example of the church that says that everyone should be serving in the church, so get busy because that's your calling. But Mary knew what was important, and Jesus emphasizes this when He said:

† **Luke 10:41-42** *And Jesus answered and said to her, "**Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.**"*

Now, it doesn't mean that Mary never served in the church or others outside of the church. And it's very likely that Mary did serve in their home after Jesus was done teaching. But Mary knew that to serve inside or outside of the church, she needed to be equipped with God's word, which was what she was doing. Martha complained about her own ministry of serving, because that's all she focused on. But I think Mary served later with joy and love, because she spent time focusing on Jesus first.

*"But I can't stop doing, so many depend upon me and the things I do."* You may be thinking. But, isn't that what Martha thought when she wanted Mary to serve along with her? Martha thought that what she was doing was so important, and that the people needed what she was doing, more than what Jesus was doing (teaching).

Read that again, just a little slower this time:

**Martha thought that what she was doing was so important, and that the people needed what she was doing, more than what Jesus was doing (teaching).**

Even with Christmas just around the corner, people get so involved in preparation for it by setting up their tree, the lights, going shopping, etc.. that they get so exhausted that by the time Christmas comes around, all they want to do is nothing and recoup from all their work, instead of enjoying the day with Jesus.

† **Luke 10:39** *And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.*

† **Mark 6:30-31** *Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, "**Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.**" For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Busy, busy, busy, we are so busy sometimes that like the devotional teaches, we don't have time for Jesus. But we look good to others because we do so much for Him. It's like the husband who works 10, 12, 15 hours a day and people think, "*Oh, look how much he loves his wife and kids, because he works hard to take care of them.*" When in fact the wife and kids would rather do with less, so that they can have more of their dad, and wife more time with her husband.

Paul writes about this very thing in his letter to the Corinthians.

† **1 Cor 13:1-3** *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

As we look at the definition of love right after this in the same letter.

† **1 Cor 13:4-7** *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

We read one of the first things that Jesus told the church of Ephesus that they do, was to *suffers long* or *you have persevered and have patience*. So you would think if they have this patience, how could they not have love, after all it's mentioned as one of the attributes of love in I Corinthians?

If I were to make a cake, I would need eggs, milk, flour, sugar, and baking powder. If I only used eggs, I wouldn't have a cake, but rather scrambled eggs. So just because you do one of the things that love is, does not mean you are truly being loving.

“OK, but it also says that they *“have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars”* or in regards to love *“does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth”*”

Still with my same scenario, if I used eggs and flour, I still wouldn't have a cake, maybe pancakes at the most, which is not a cake and would not rise without the baking powder and would not be sweet at all without sugar. Just because you have a few of the things mentioned in the definition of love, does not mean you have true love. Unless you practice **all** the things mentioned, then you are just a *sounding brass or a clanging cymbal* and *it profits me nothing*.

So the real question for us is, are we known by God and Jesus?

† **1 Cor 8:3** *But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*

† **Matt 7:21-23** *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

Jesus told the church in Ephesus that they were so busy doing, that they forgot about their first love, Him (Jesus). Just because someone does things like giving to charity or even going to church does not make him or her a Christian. Think of all these secular bands that sing of sex and drugs and partying and anything else they think they can get away with. This could be any band from heavy metal to country. These same bands will also give benefit concerts to help out the poor. They come up with "Band Aid" and other means of raising money for those in need, but still they are not Christians and even blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ while doing so.

What about those people who make predictions of things that will happen each year, isn't it a form of prophecy, even though they come out to be false prophets? Still they are not Christians, yet they **try** to have some form of godliness.

What about the magicians that can make entire buildings disappear, or who can even float above the earth with no wires. There is one guy who I saw on TV once that would walk down the street and come up to strangers and then levitate about a foot off the ground right in front of their eyes. The people who saw this were scarred to death and felt an evil presence when he did this.

Now in all of these examples, they usually don't do these things in the name of Jesus. But it just goes to show you that even though someone does something in the name of Jesus, *"done many wonders in Your name"*, that it does not make him or her a Christian.

I remember a time many years ago when my sisters and brother in law and I went to one of those Holy Spirit types of crusade services. This was a traveling guy who went from church to church and would preach, and then the sideshow would begin. I remember I went forward for healing for my back. He had me sit in a chair and put my legs out straight in front of me. To my surprise, it appeared that one of my legs was shorter than

the other. He then grabbed the shorter leg and pulled and the leg actually grew longer, at least six inches past the other leg, then went back. My feet also started to twist and turn inward to a position I never knew they could go to with my toes now almost pointing down inwardly. The real bad thing was that it hurt; there was pain in my legs when this was happening. But he still did this all in the name of Jesus... So he said.

I don't know about you, but I never read anywhere where Jesus healed someone, and when He did it, the healing would cause him or her pain. So was this guy a Christian? I will not say yes or no, only God knows, but I do know it was a sideshow, and some of the things that happened I don't find in scripture at all.

One other example is my oldest sister went forward to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So he prayed over her then told her to start speaking in tongues. She said she didn't know how, and he told her "Just start babbling and it will come" so she did, and she babbled right there in front of everyone. Later that night, we all went out to dinner and we asked her about it, and she said that he told me to babble so I did. But I never spoke in tongues and she never have since.

So why do I tell you all of this? One to teach you by experience. But most important because Jesus said in verses 4 and 5 to the church in Ephesus.

✠ *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.*

We are so set on doing, so much so, that we tend to do so much, that we are doing things under our own strength and not the power of the Holy Spirit. For the fruits of the Spirit, the first fruit mentioned is love.

✠ **Gal 5:22a** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love,*

And to be filled with the Holy Spirit is not only for power to do things, but also to be filled with the love of God, and to do for others out of that love.

✠ **2 Tim 1:7** *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

So no matter what we do, unless it's done out of love, it's all for nothing. Paul also said that,

✠ **1 Cor 13:2-3 & 13** *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

*“the greatest of these is love”* I think that says it all right there!

One other thing I noticed is that John was a member of this church, and as I said in the opening: *“Because of John’s old age at this time, he was not the head of the church, but must have been a dominating influence among the pastors.”* If you read the **Gospel of John and I, II & III John**, you read of John talking a lot about love and how to love others and God. John may have very well taught about love in the church in Ephesus, but it seems the people were not listening or had gotten so busy that they forgot about it.

Every Sunday we all sit in church and listen to the pastor teach from God’s word. The question is, are we listening and doing what we are taught or just taking up space?

So how do you know if you are jus taking up space and have left your first love? Jesus tells us.

† **Matthew 25:31-46** *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Are you doing because you expect something in return, hoping that God would see it and bless you with a new car or home or a raise or spouse or \_\_\_\_\_?

Maybe you are not doing it for money or stuff, but what about recognition? Do you want your name put on a plaque up on a wall for all to see? Do you want your name mentioned on TV or the radio because you gave? Do you want your name to be spoken out from the pulpit by your pastor? One thing I hate to see on social media is when others post of the things they are doing for the Lord. Jesus address this when He says:

✠ **Matthew 6:1-4** *Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

Remember, it's not, "*I have to serve Jesus*" but rather "*I get to serve Jesus*" and the way to serve Him best is by doing for others, not wanting anything in return and not even for others to know that you have done it.

We all seem to want to be recognized by the pastor and to have an "in" with him like, "*Hey I know the pastor and he came over for dinner and we talked and we are going to his home group and?*" Yet, we seem to forget that he is just a normal person like you and me. But still, some will put him on a pedestal looking up to him, but then they look down on Jesus if He doesn't do what they ask Him (Jesus) to do.

But John, once again speaking of love says that "*We love Him because He first loved us.*" **1 John 4:19** We need to remember that Jesus first loved us and hasn't stopped loving us. So what do we do if we have been doing out of self-seeking or not out of love? Jesus not only tells the churches what they are doing both good and bad, but also how to repent from the bad that they are doing. In this case for the church in Ephesus, Jesus tells them:

✠ *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.*

Repent means to turn around and go the other way. If you were headed for a bar to get drunk, to repent would be to turn around and walk away from the bar. To repent and return to our first love is to stop doing if our motives are not out of love for Jesus.

Remember that Martha thought that what she was doing was so important, that the people needed what she was doing, more than what Jesus was doing. If that's your way of thinking, then ask yourself, "are you just benefiting them physically or spiritually with the things you do?" Sure you can feed the poor all you want, but unless you also share Jesus with them, what good does it do them? Jesus went around feeding the hungry, healing the sick, casting out demons, but Jesus also preached the gospel and used the

things He did to demonstrate the Love of the Father to others. We must do the things Jesus told us to, and that includes telling them about Jesus and not just supplying their physical needs.

As we read in **Matt 25:31-46** we are to minister to those in need. But Jesus also said:

† **Mark 16:15** *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."*

Once again I ask; what good does it do to feed the hungry if they are headed for hell. Their tummies will be full here on the earth, but what about afterwards. Would you want these people to be standing before God being judged and have them look over at you and ask, "You feed me, but why didn't you also tell me about Jesus?"

So many are in relationships where they are in sexual sin. They say they are in it because they love that other person. If they love them so much, then why are they helping that person go to hell? We can say we love others, but the real way to tell if you love someone is, "Are you helping them to get to heaven or hell?" Didn't we read that one of the attributes of love is patience? "**Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud**" **1 Corinthians 13:4 (NLT2)** But if you can't wait until you are married, where is the patience in that? And you also claim to be a Christian, and pray and call Him Lord, but Jesus asks you.

✧ **Luke 6:46** *But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?*

If you call Jesus Lord, then you should be one of those who demonstrate it by:

- † *'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'*
- † *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*
- † *'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*

If you don't want to do these things, then you don't really want to call Jesus Lord. Jesus gave the church of Ephesus a warning of what would happen if they didn't listen and repent.

✧ *or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-- unless you repent.*

Remember what the lampstands represented? *the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

So Jesus was warning them that if they didn't repent that the church would no longer exist. So do they cease to exist? The question is not did they repent and listen to Jesus; but will you?

Jesus has one more thing to say to the church in Ephesus.

✠ **Rev 2:6-7** *But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

Who were the Nicolaitans?

*They were a sect or party of evil influence in early Christianity, especially in the 7 churches of Asia. Their doctrine was similar to that of Balaam, and Jesus tells us what they practiced in His letter to the third church, which we will study in a few weeks:*

✠ **Rev 2:14-15** *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

The church in Ephesus hated these things and was commended for it.

✠ *But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

So we should also recognize that we are commended also for our hatred of these things that are bad and wrong and against what God says in His word.

Finally, to end this letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus says:

✠ *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

The last we heard about the Tree of Life was in Genesis:

✠ **Gen 3:24** *So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.*

So at some point, (possible during or right before the great flood (Think Noah's Ark)), God took *the tree of life* and placed it in heaven. We who overcome will be able to eat

from this tree, and I bet the fruit doesn't taste like an apple. But in order to find out, you must be there to partake of it.

Will you?

Well, that's it for this week. Next week we will read the letter to the next church, which is the church in Smyrna.

May the Lord richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy and may your mouth water because you long to eat of the tree of life in heaven.