

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

2:1-7

REVELATION OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

Revelation 2:1-7

Jesus Writes to the Church in Ephesus

Revelation 2-3 records Jesus, Himself, talking directly to the churches, telling us what He is pleased with and what He is displeased with, giving us promises and warnings. These are things we need to know in order to bring Him Glory as we are part of the church today.

Jesus begins by saying, “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One Who walks among the seven golden lamp stands, says this...” Revelation 2:1

Who is speaking? We can know it's Jesus because Revelation 1 told us He is the One Who holds the seven stars in His right hand and the One Who walks among the seven gold lamp stands. Think about that. What is He walking among? The churches. Do you think that He has quit His daily walks? He walks among the churches today.

There is a pattern in each one of these churches which shows up clearly through repeated phrases. You can just watch the format repeat itself over and over. I'm going to mainly write about two main things from each church. First: What does Jesus have against the church? What have they done wrong? What does Jesus say about them, or you? Second: What does Jesus say to do? What do they, or we, need to repent from?

Jesus says... ***“I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.”***
Revelation 2:2-3

What do we know about verses 2 and 3? Those are all good things. Those are things that we need to be doing. Do work for the kingdom of God, work hard at it, and persevere in the midst of opposition. It is a good thing to not tolerate evil men. Evil (the leaven of Matthew 13) is something that permeates most churches today! We are *supposed* to test those who call themselves apostles, or pastors, or teachers, etc. to find out whether they are false! In today's church society, that is almost *unheard* of. It is sometimes even considered sin because it's labeled as some form of judging. Whereas Jesus said that is what we are supposed to be doing!

Living a Christian life requires perseverance and endurance because the world will come against everyone who carries the Name of Jesus high enough for others to see.

It would be easy to become weary because of all the opposition that must certainly come. How many so-called Christians in how many so-called churches have *anyone* or *anything* come against them because of the Name of Jesus—much more so have opposition enough to actually weary them?

Jesus continues, ***“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”*** Revelation 2:4

Don't ever listen to a teacher's lesson or a pastor's sermon if they talk about *losing* their first love because that is not what Jesus says. That's not true. Jesus says they *left* their first love and that is a choice. You started doing deeds, you did them right, but eventually those deeds became more important to you than your first love, Jesus Christ. You weren't focused on Him and why He *wanted* them done.

Jesus says, ***“Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.”*** Revelation 2:5

Were they going to be doing *different* deeds necessarily, or deeds in a different way? They were going to do them for the right reason, with the love of Jesus coming first. I have been in Ephesus. I have stood in the place where the lamp stand has been removed. There is no church in Ephesus. Ultimately they did not repent... and the church was removed...

Jesus now returns to the good, to what they have done right. ***“Yet this you do have that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*** Revelation 2:6

Hate... The *word* “hate” is hated, but *sin* is not! People refuse to even use the word, much less obey God's command! We are *supposed* to hate evil deeds; He does, and we are too!

Then Jesus says, ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*** Revelation 2:7a

Jesus is not just speaking to the seven churches during John's day, but the Spirit is speaking to *all* churches—yours and mine, too. You could do something yourself that would help you hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Make a list. List each church and put columns beside them. List every single thing and let the Spirit speak to you about each one of those things. Once you are done with all seven churches, line yourself and your church up with what Jesus says. Then repent of what is displeasing to Him and persevere in what He is pleased with.

“To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.” Revelation 2:7b

In the case of Ephesus, they needed to overcome having left their first love. They needed to repent and return to their first love and start doing their deeds for the right reason.

Let me show you the pattern that is going to be in each and every one of the seven letters to the churches. The first phrase will be, "*To the angel of (whatever church) write.*" Next Jesus will be speaking and He will give a description of Himself. He will describe Himself differently to each of the seven churches.

Then, after He describes Himself, and at the very end of each letter, He always says, "*He who has an ear let him hear.*" In other words, everybody who is able to listen, you need to hear, you need to pay attention to what He is saying. That doesn't mean just when a reader is reading it. You need to warn *everybody* that goes to any church anywhere that they have a command from God to read Revelation, that they have a command to hear what Jesus says in this book. The phrase, "he who has an ear, let him hear", is imperative in the Greek, which means it is a command. Everybody in every church needs to study these two chapters. Use your ears to hear these words yourself, whether anyone else listens to you or not.

Finally, there is a promise given to the overcomers. Again, our goal in this observation series is simply an overview (not to study everything deeply), but just for the record—what is an overcomer? Jesus said, "*I have overcome the world*" and Jesus is in us. If you are a believer, you will overcome. It is *that* simple because it is His power. You *will* overcome, you will repent of things that you're doing wrong. You will understand that they are wrong and be convicted and you will repent of them. If you are a Christian you *are* an overcomer, even if you haven't overcome yet, because He will finish and complete what He started in you.

All of the promises to the overcomers are promises to all Christians. Basically, they're things which will be received in heaven.

We just looked at Jesus' communication to the church at Ephesus. He told them to return to their first love. Believing that you need to feel a warm fuzzy or a strong emotion, or that you need to make your relationship with Jesus "enjoyable" is false. You still have to pray and study and worship no matter how you feel if you truly love Him, if He is your first love. It is a matter of priority. It is a matter of faith. It is a matter of obedience.

These are seven literal churches and the best thing we can get out of them is to know that what they did wrong is wrong for us to do and what they did right is right for us to do. To find out what Christ is pleased and displeased with and line our lives up accordingly—that's the first and primary reason for studying them. First and foremost, let His disapproval and His approval convict you as the Spirit is speaking to you.

However, it is a wonderful study to additionally do a historical check on each of the churches. You will find His description to be so accurate and so perfect for each individual church it will increase your love for our amazing God.

These churches are often seen in their entirety of seven as an “historical sequence of churches from the beginning until the end”. That is definitely not the primary purpose of these chapters at all, but you can see this kind of historical timeline play out from the beginning until the end if you know a little church history. If that is true, the scary part is—what’s at the end? If we’re in the end times, what church would that put us in? Laodicea. When we get to Laodicea it will be something that we have to reckon with because we don’t want to believe that we’re like that—we don’t want to believe that churches at large are like that... but Christ says they are.

First and foremost, as you read the letters to the churches, let His disapproval and His approval convict you as the Spirit is speaking to you...