

The Seven Letters from Jesus
Letter #1 – Sent to the Church of Ephesus
Revelation 2:1-7 (4/19/09 AM)

The entire Book of Revelation is written to seven churches. (1:11) “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia:”

The book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible that contains an inspired outline of the book.

(1:19) “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”

“The things which you have seen” – Chapter 1, the vision of Jesus Christ

“The things which are” – Chapters 2 & 3, the seven letters

“The things which will take place after this” – Chapters 4-22

These letters contain the last audible message of the risen Jesus to His church. (1:18) “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

- **Seven literal local churches**

Each of these churches existed in John’s day in what is today the area of Turkey. God sovereignly arranged them geographically (MAP) as John’s Revelation was sent to each of them. The emphasis in the New Testament is upon the local church.

- **Seven types of local churches**

All of these types of churches have existed throughout the Church Age and do exist today.

- **Seven prophetic periods**

The churches have appeared to parallel the stages of church history.

John’s vision of Jesus is partially explained in 1:20, “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches”. Is this an angelic being or the human leader of the church? All other references are to angelic beings.

“The seven lampstands...are the seven churches.” Each local church is to be a light to the world.

The church is not the source of light; Jesus is the light of the world.

The Local Church Is To Be a Light Bearer of the Gospel

The seven letters all follow a basic pattern. This will be seen as we consider each church individually. The first letter is sent to “the church of Ephesus” (2:1). Ephesus was the most prominent of the seven.

Ephesus means “the desired one”. It was the most prominent city in the Roman province of Asia. The Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located there. The pagan worship involved there was of the basest immorality and debauchery.

In Acts 19 Paul spent two years establishing this church. They also were ministered to by Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos, and Timothy. The Apostle John was the pastor of Ephesus when he was arrested and exiled to the Isle of Patmos. Most likely all of these churches were started because of the impact of the church of Ephesus. Acts 19:10, “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

This Church had a Great Legacy and a Great Ministry

1. The Vision of the Lord Jesus (1-2a)

Each Letter Begins with Part of the Vision of Chapter 1

“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands”

- **The Lord Jesus is the head of the local church**

He holds, to firmly grasp, the leaders in His hand. He is the One who holds the authority. It was to this church that Paul wrote,

“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church”, Ephesians 5:23.

Jesus Christ Is the Source of the Church's Authority

- **The Lord Jesus is present in the local church**

He is pictured as He “who walks in the midst” of the churches.

This is a source of both reassurance and caution. He is present in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ Is Present for both Protection and Correction

- **Only Jesus knows the true condition of each church** “I know your works”

Every letter contains this statement. The word *oida* means complete knowledge. As the risen Jesus moves among His people “His eyes like a flame of fire” (1:14) examines them.

Christ's Evaluation Is the Only One that Truly Matters

2. The Commendation from the Lord Jesus (2-3, 6)

This Is What Jesus Considers Important

What Jesus addresses in each letter reveals the things that are most important to Him in the life of a church and a Christian.

- **They worked hard in the Lord's work**

The word “labor” means to work to the point of exhaustion. They had applied Paul's teaching on doing “the work of the ministry” in Ephesians 4.

- **They persevered in the Lord's work**

“Your patience...and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.”

The church is over forty years old and they have faithfully served in the midst of persecution and trials. They did it for Christ's glory not their own.

- **They took a stand for the Lord**

“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”

Paul had warned them of this very thing in Acts 20:29-30, “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.”

(6) “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

We cannot know for sure who they were. Some of the church fathers say they were a sect that taught believers could engage in sinful activity. Others believe they originated the division between the clergy and the laity.

They Were Faithful to the Work and Faithful to the Word

3. The Rebuke from the Lord Jesus (4)

Their Loss of Love

“You have left your first love”

This is emphatic “your first love you have left!” In all of their labor and doctrinal correctness they had become loveless. Their service and their worship had become

mechanical. This is a second generation of believers. They did not have the passion of their forefathers.

- **Love is essential**

Agape love is the first fruit of the Spirit in [Galatians 5:22](#). Paul taught that service without love is useless. [1 Corinthians 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.”

Paul had stress the importance of love in his letter to the [Ephesians](#). He used the word 14 times.

[Ephesians 3:17](#), “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love...”

[Ephesians 5:1-2](#), “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us...”

Without love our ministry amounts to nothing.

The First Rebuke from the Risen Savior Is About Love

4. [The Command from the Lord Jesus \(5\)](#)

The Restoration of Love

- **Remember how you used to be**

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen”

It means to keep on remembering, hold in memory. Don’t focus on the reasons for failure but focus on the memory of our past relationship. Was there a time in my life that I was closer to Jesus than I am today? If you can’t remember how it was go and find a new Christian.

Take a Spiritual Inventory

- **Repent of what you are doing**

The word means to turn around. What are the things in my life that have come between Jesus and me? Have I become spiritually apathetic? I acknowledge my true condition. I confess my lack of devotion. I stop excusing and rationalizing. Spiritual apathy is a slow process. We often don’t realize that our love is fading.

Tear Down the Idols

- **Return to the things you used to do**

“And do the first works”

Spend time in prayer and the Word. Spend time in worship and service. Get back to the spiritual deeds and disciplines. What specifically do I need to return to?

Communion and Communication Cause Love to Grow

A church can only continue so long on a loveless course. Eventually it will not longer represent the risen Jesus.

“**Or else** I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent.”

The church at Ephesus continued strong for a while but eventually passed into history like many churches in our own city.

5. [The Promise of the Lord Jesus \(7\)](#)

Preceded By an Exhortation

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Jesus often used a similar phrase in His public ministry. These messages are for every church and every Christian.

“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 one who overcomes is the true Christian**

John identified overcomers in his epistle. 1 John 5:4-5, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

This is not a higher level of spirituality. Heaven awaits those who are truly saved.

- **The tree of life is symbolic of eternal life**

The tree of life first appeared in the Garden of Eden. It appears again at the end of Revelation in the New Jerusalem. (22:2) “In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

The tree of life is symbolic of eternal life which the risen Jesus gives to all who trust in Him. He is the One who has restored what was lost in Eden with the fall.

Jesus Ends His Letter with Hope