



REVELATION 2.1-7 HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE?

Ephesus:

- This port was a place of shifting sands, due to the silting up of the mouth of the Cayster. Ramsay (Letters to the Seven Churches, p. 210) calls it **“the City of Change.”** ¹
- Ephesus: the temple-keeper of Artemis and her wonderful temple (Acts 19:35), the home of the magic arts (Ephesian letters, Acts 19:19) and of the mystery-cults, ²

Acts 19:35 And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that **the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?**”

- *The Temple of Artemis (or Diana, according to her Roman name) at Ephesus ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.* As the twin sister of Apollo and the daughter of Zeus, Artemis was known variously as the moon goddess, the goddess of hunting, and the patroness of young girls. The temple at Ephesus housed the image of Artemis that was reputed to have come directly from Zeus (Acts 19:35). ³
- One of the most immoral cities of those times.
 - 2nd only to perhaps Corinth

¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:1.

² A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:1.

³ Youngblood, R. F. (1997, c1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary : An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations* (F. Bruce, Ed.) (electronic ed. of the revised ed. of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Ephesus was the largest city in the province, having a population of perhaps 300,000 people. ⁴
 - Dominated by the pagan worship of the fertility goddess: Artemis/Diana.
 - This city had more **“special”** ministers than any other:
 - **Paul; Timothy; John; Mary; Luke; Silas; Aquila and Priscilla; Apollos** (Acts 18:19, 24, 26);
 - **Trophimus and Tychicus** (probably natives of Ephesus (Acts 20:4; 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:12));
 - **Onesiphorus** (2 Tim. 1:18); ⁵
 - **More written to, and about, Ephesus than any other city, church and people in the Bible.**
 - Paul founded and invested 3 years of ministry here.
- 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.

Acts 19:19–20

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember that **for three years** I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

- Timothy received his 2 letters (from Paul) as the Pastor in Ephesus
- Apostle John ministered at this church in his old age.
- Mary, mother of Jesus, lived out the remainder of her days here and is buried outside the city next to John's tomb.

John 19:26–27

26 When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and **the disciple whom He loved** standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”

27 Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

⁴ Youngblood, R. F. (1997, c1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary : An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations* (F. Bruce, Ed.) (electronic ed. of the revised ed. of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary.). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

- This large city was thoroughly stirred by Paul's message (Acts 19:11-41), with the result that the silversmiths created a riot because their business of making shrines of Artemis was threatened.
 - Ephesus was a notorious center of pagan superstition. It was famous for the Ephesian Letters, amulets and charms which were supposed to be infallible remedies for sickness, to bring children to those who were childless and to ensure success in any undertaking; and people came from all over the world to buy them. ⁶
- **Word: "sincere" was invented here.**
 - "sin": without
 - "cere": wax
 - **"without wax"** – a statue was considered to be "sincere" if there was no wax falsely posing as silver.
 - The city of love always had problems with sincerity.
- Paul had warned the Ephesian Elders of impending intra-church "sincerity" problems:
- Apostle Paul's broken heart was revealed as he visited with the Elders of Ephesus on a nearby beach.

Acts 20:16 – 20 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when **they** had come to him, he said to them:

"You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

19 **serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials** which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 how **I kept back nothing that was helpful,**

Acts 20:25–27

⁶ *The Revelation of John : Volume 1.* 2000, c1976 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Re 2:8). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

25 “And indeed, now I know that you all, **among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.**

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 **For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**

Basic Format for the messages to the 7 churches:

1. Commendation
2. Condemnation
3. Exhortation
4. Promise
 - 2 Churches without condemnation: Smyrna and Philadelphia
 - 1 Church without commendation: Laodicea

1 “To the **angel**⁷ 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:

Angel:

- **Nowhere in these documents are “angels” thought of as anything other than angels.**

What John appears to do, therefore, is to keep the apocalyptic genre alive by the use of this word, since what follows in each case is the least apocalyptic material in the entire document. Most likely it is John’s need to address the seven churches in a basically straightforward manner, accompanied by his desire to keep intact the apocalyptic nature of the book as a whole, that has brought about this unusual way of speaking to the seven churches. After all, angels reappear throughout the book as presenting or carrying out the divine plan. Even so, throughout John’s entire vision angels are consistently placed in a secondary position to Christ (on which matter, cf. Hebrews 1:5–14).⁸

- **H. Alford** strongly supports this position and attempts to discredit the idea that pastors or bishops may be in view.⁹
- **Richard Trench** finds Alford’s arguments unconvincing and presents a strong case for the idea that the angel of each church is its “bishop.” Those to whom this title is ascribed are herein presented to the Church as clothed with a peculiar dignity and are herein themselves reminded that they stand before One, whose ministries of grace and love they should be swift to fulfil on earth, even as those whose names they bear are swift to fulfil them in heaven. **There is then a certain, though very partial right in what Origen taught;**

⁷ Hemer has indicated at least five reasonably prominent understandings of the meaning of the **angel**. He speaks of these as (1) heavenly guardians of the church, (2) human representatives of those churches, generally identified as their bishops or pastors, (3) personifications of the churches themselves, (4) literally human messengers who were perhaps the postmen, or (5) usage of the term in “some complex and elusive way or at differing levels” so that no lexical equivalent tells the whole story. (C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, The Biblical Resource Series, JSNT Sup 11 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 32.)

⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation*, New Covenant Commentary Series (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 24.

⁹ *The Greek Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 4.560–61.

and 'Angel' is a heavenly title here; but a heavenly title which has been borrowed by earth, which has been transferred and applied to men; a transfer not without its analogies in the Old Testament (Eccles. 5:6; Hagg. 1:13; Mal. 2:7; 3:1); and rendered more easy by the fact that Angel is a name not designating the *personality*, but only the *office*, of those heavenly beings by whom it properly is borne. ¹⁰

- Jesus is in the midst of His churches
- He holds the church's divine beings in his hand
 - Gives us the impression of ultimate control, ultimate care, ultimate love of His Angels and His church.
 - Jesus holds His angels in His right hand – they always obey everything they are told.
 - **Angels are not agents of choice** in response to the Lord, they cannot disobey.
 - **We are agents of choice** – we choose to do right, or we can choose to do wrong.

2 "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;

- **False teachers were present in each of the first four churches.** (*cf. vv. 2, 6, 9, 14-15, 20.*) ¹¹
- The early church father **Ignatius**, writing not long after John penned the book of Revelation, also commended the Ephesians for their vigilance:
"You heed nobody beyond what he has to say truthfully about Jesus Christ. ... I have heard that some strangers came your way with a wicked teaching. But you did not let them sow it among you. You stopped up your ears to prevent admitting what they disseminated"
(Ephesians 6.2; 9.1; cited in Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers*, 89, 90).
- "works"
 - Good works are the result of your motivation for doing those works.
1 Corinthians 3:12–15
12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

¹⁰ R. C. Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia: Revelation II. III* [Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1978], 59–60).

¹¹ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

13 each one's work will become clear;

for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire;

and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

2 Corinthians 5:9–10

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, **that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

- It was also a sacrificing church, for the word labor means **“toil to the point of exhaustion.”**¹²

3 and you have **persevered** and have **patience**,
and have **labored** for My name's sake
and have not become weary.

- **Persevered; Patience; labored; not become weary.**
 - All traits of those that succeed in ministry
 - YET – the church of Ephesus needed to repent!
 - Regardless of the size of the church, **success is gauged upon our LOVE for Christ Jesus.**
 - **Love that endures through hardship**
 - **Love that never seeks its own**
 - **Love that motivates every Spiritual gift expression**
 - **Love that takes great care in removing the speck from your brother's eye.**
- Weariness was not the reason for Ephesus falling out of their **“first love”** with Jesus!

Galatians 6:9–10

9 And **let us not grow weary while doing good,**

¹² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996, c1989). *The Bible exposition commentary*. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. (Re 2:1). Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

2 Thessalonians 3:13 But as for you, brethren, do not **grow weary in doing good.**

- **25.288 ἐγκακέω; ἐκλύομαι^b: to lose one's motivation to accomplish some valid goal—'to become discouraged, to lose heart, to give up.'**
 - ἐγκακέω: μὴ ἐγκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες 'don't be discouraged in doing good' 2 Th 3:13; διὸ αἰτοῦμαι μὴ ἐγκακεῖν ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσίν μου ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν 'as I suffer difficulties on your behalf, I ask you not to give up' Eph 3:13. **In place of a negative expression such as 'not to give up,' it may be better in some languages to use a positive equivalent, for example, 'to keep on' or 'to continue.'** ¹³

4 Nevertheless **I have this against you,**
that you have left your first love.

- This rebuke contrasts with what Paul wrote the Ephesians **35 years earlier**, that he never stopped giving thanks for them because of their faith in Christ and their love for the saints. ¹⁴

Ephesians 1:15-16 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and **your love for all the saints,**
16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

- **In the City of Love (of Diana), there was no "Agape" love.**
- Who is this "first love?"
 - It's not Miss Waters, your teacher from 6th grade!
 - What would qualify as your first love today?

Ephesians 6:24 Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ **in sincerity.** Amen.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV84)

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

¹³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 318.

¹⁴ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ¹⁵

Morning & Evening – Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“Ever to be remembered is that best and brightest of hours, when first we saw the Lord, lost our burden, received the roll of promise, rejoiced in full salvation, and went on our way in peace. It was spring time in the soul; the winter was past; the mutterings of Sinai’s thunders were hushed; the flashings of its lightnings were no more perceived; God was beheld as reconciled; the law threatened no vengeance, justice demanded no punishment. Then the flowers appeared in our heart; hope, love, peace, and patience sprung from the sod; the hyacinth of repentance, the snowdrop of pure holiness, the crocus of golden faith, the daffodil of early love, all decked the garden of the soul. The time of the singing of birds was come, and we rejoiced with thanksgiving; we magnified the holy name of our forgiving God, and our resolve was, “Lord, I am thine, wholly thine; all I am, and all I have, I would devote to thee. Thou hast bought me with thy blood—let me spend myself and be spent in thy service. In life and in death let me be consecrated to thee.” How have we kept this resolve? Our espousal love burned with a holy flame of devotedness to Jesus—is it the same now? Might not Jesus well say to us, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love”? Alas! it is but little we have done for our Master’s glory. Our winter has lasted all too long. We are as cold as ice when we should feel a summer’s glow and bloom with sacred flowers. We give to God pence when he deserveth pounds, nay, deserveth our heart’s blood to be coined in the service of his church and of his truth. But shall we continue thus? O Lord, after thou hast so richly blessed us, shall we be ungrateful and become indifferent to thy good cause and work? O quicken us that we may return to our first love, and do our first works! Send us a genial spring, O Sun of Righteousness.” ¹⁶

Lost First Love

1. When my delight in the Lord is no longer as great as my delight in someone else, **I have lost my first love.**
2. When my soul does not long for times of rich fellowship in God’s Word or in prayer, **I have lost my first love.**
3. When my thoughts during leisure moments do not reflect upon the Lord, I have lost my first love.
4. When I claim to be “only human” and easily give in to those things I know displease the Lord, I have lost my first love.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 1 Co 13:1–3.

¹⁶ Spurgeon, C. H. (1995). *Morning and evening : Daily readings* (February 11 PM). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

5. When I do not willingly and cheerfully give to God's work or to the needs of others, I have lost my first love.
6. When I cease to treat every Christian brother as I would the Lord, I have lost my first love.
7. When I view the commands of Christ as restrictions to my happiness rather than expressions of His love, I have lost my first love.
8. When I inwardly strive for the acclaim of this world rather than the approval of the Lord, I have lost my first love.
9. When I fail to make Christ, or His words known, because I fear rejection, I have lost my first love.
10. When I refuse to give up an activity which I know is offending a weaker brother, I have lost my first love.
11. When I become complacent to sinful conditions around me, I have lost my first love.
12. When I am unable to forgive another for offending me, I have lost my first love.

Pulpit Helps, May, 1992

5 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**.

- Repentance is the “reset button” for everything in life.
- **Down in the valley, look up to the cliff where pure love is and whence thou hast fallen down.**

And repent (και μετανοησον [*kai metanoēson*]). First aorist active imperative of μετανοεω [*metanoēō*], **urgent appeal for instant change of attitude and conduct before it is too late.**

And do (και ποιησον [*kai poiēson*]). First aorist active imperative of ποιεω [*poiēō*], **“Do at once.”** ¹⁷

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, **not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**

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

Hate the sin, love the sinner?

¹⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:5.

- No matter how you paint the sin – **God hates it!**
 - **AT NO POINT IS GOD EVER OK WITH YOUR SIN!**
 - **God says He HATES HEIR DEEDS!**

Romans 6:1–4 (NLT)

1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?

2 Of course not!

Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

3 Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death?

4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. ¹⁸

Ephesians hated their doctrines

Pergamos loved their doctrines

- **Nicolaism** (also Nicholaism, Nicolaitism, Nicolationism, or Nicolaitanism) is a Christian heresy first mentioned (twice) in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament, whose adherents were called Nicolaitans, Nicolaitanes, or Nicolaites. ¹⁹
 - **Salvation based upon works, not faith.**

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, **and that not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God,

7 “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.” ’

- **It is obvious that the Spirit is speaking to those capable of hearing what the Holy Spirit speaks.**
 - Not speaking to the Pagans of the Temple
 - Not speaking to those that are even on the verge of becoming believers.
 - Not speaking to the ANGEL of the church – speaking through him – ANGELS are messengers/ministers.
 - Not speaking to the city or the church building

¹⁸ Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), Ro 6:1–4.

¹⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolaism>

- Speaking to:
 - Seasoned believers
 - Serving believers
 - Discerning believers
 - Hard working believers
- What would our life in Christ be like without the Spirit's voice?

Isaiah 6:9–10

9 And He said, “Go, and tell this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’”

10 “Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed.”

Tree of Life:

At the beginning of human history:

Genesis 3:22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of **the tree of life**, and eat, and live forever”—

At the close of human history

Revelation 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.

Those who eat of it will never die.