

Part I

Preparation of the People: Their Present Condition (2:1–3:22)

Chapter 1

Ephesus: Loveless Orthodoxy (2:1–7)

Revelation 2 and 3 portrays the current state of the churches. The events in chapters 4 to 22 should motivate the church to live up to the standards shown in chapters 2 and 3 which the Lord expect from His churches. These chapters are highly practical. The general structure of the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3:

1. Address opening each letter,
2. Attribute of the speaker, derived from chapter 1,

3. Complete knowledge about the people of the church,
4. State of the church, which is described by the way of praise, warning, promise,
5. Promise of the Lords imminent return,
6. Universal command for all the churches to hear and obey, and
7. Blessing promised to the over comer.

Note: Though the call is universal, it was conveyed individually to each church. The promised blessing anticipates millennial and eternal blessings described later in the book.

1.1 Address opening the letter (2:1a)

Revelation 2:1a

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write ...

1. **The angel of the church:** whose identity can be concluded as an individual representing the church (See details in Rev. 1:20).

2. Church Ekklesia:

- (a) The Greek word **Ekklesia** for church is derived from two words **Ek** meaning **out of** and **kleo** means **I call**. Thus church means **called out** group from all the previous relationship in order to constitute a body with special relation to God

Acts 15:14. Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name

Rom. 9:24. even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

I Cor. 10:32. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God,

- (b) **Universal church**: a technical term denoting group all Christians, of all ages (from Pentecost to rapture), figuratively referred as **the body of Christ**.

Mat. 16:18. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not

Col. 1:18. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Col. 1:24. I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

(c) Local church: a particular assembly in a given location or all the assemblies in a given city.

Rom. 16:1. I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea,

Rom. 16:5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.

1 Cor. 1:2. To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1 Cor. 16:19. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house

Col. 4:15. Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

3. Ephesus:

(a) Largest and prominent metropolis in the province of Asia Minor. Commercially, it was the largest city in the Roman province of Asia. The city had annual athletic games which attracted large crowds from all over Asia. The patron goddess of the city is Artemis (in Latin) or Diana (in Greek). The 425-foot long

by 220-foot wide temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Each of its 120 columns was donated by a king. The image of Artemis was one of the most sacred objects of worship in the ancient world, but it was not beautiful. Besides being a religious center, the temple was a gathering place for criminals and the scene of widespread immorality.

(b) Paul had an unusual ministry in this city.

Act 18:1-20. And it happened . . . that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. 8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 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. 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.

Act 19:24-35. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen . . . 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. 27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." 28 Now

when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” . . . 34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” 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?

Act 20:17-38. 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, 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him

(c) Tradition says that Apostle John ministered in Ephesus AD 66 until his death.

(d) 9 NT books are connected with Ephesus – John, 1 Cor., Eph., 1, 2 Timothy, 1, 2, 3 John, Rev.

1.2 Attributes of the speaker (2:1b)

Revelation 2:1

... These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands:

1. **These things says He:** Authoritative words found 7 times in Rev. 2 & 3 and it introduces a strong, authoritative, emphatic assertion.
2. **Holds seven stars in His right hand:** It indicates authority over the church and her messengers.

Re 1:13. and in the midst of the seven lamp stands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Re 1:16. He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.
3. **Walks in the midst:** His constant movement among and watchful eye over the churches indicates his constant watch over the church.

1.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (2:2,3)

Revelation 2:2

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;

1. **Know oida**: Absolute, clear, and complete knowledge of spiritual accomplishments of the church. Contrast **ginosko** which means progress of knowledge.
2. **Works ta erga**: Good works and conduct of life. Mention of it is also found in the letters to others churches in Revelation 2 and 3.
3. **Labor kopon**: Hard work or toil to the point of exhaustion and is an outward view of work

1 Thes 1:3. remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

Rev 14:13. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'

4. **Patience or perseverance hypomonen**: endurance with respect to circumstances or hindrances encountered and is an inward view of work. Perseverance triumphs over all opposition.
5. **Bear bastasai those who are evil kakous**: To carry the burden of not tolerating evil people in the church. We are exhorted to bear the weak brothers but not of their evil.

Gal 6:2. **Bear bastasai one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ**

Evil **kakous** means wicked or good for nothing in regard to the things in which they ought to excel as good. This word is also used to refer cowardly soldier or a lazy student, and so here it refers to a professing Christian who does not live up to proper standards.

6. **Tested epeirasas**: Points to deception that needs to be exposed. Lord appreciate this and tolerating the falseness of Christians in the church is not a virtue.
7. **False pseudeis apostles apostolous**:

(a) It is possible

Cor. 11:13-15. **For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of**

light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works

(b) Sign of true apostle

1 Cor. 9:1. Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

2 Cor. 12:12. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds

Revelation 2:3

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

1. **Endurance hypomonen**: continued bearing up of the evil. Following words elaborate this concept.
2. **Bearing ebastasis**: Because of Christ, they did not accommodate the evil ones, but endured hardship in resisting them.
3. **My name**: Spreading gospel even in the midst of persecution and preserving purity the content of the gospel.

Mat. 10:22. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved

Mat. 24:9. "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake

1.4 State of the Church (2:4)

Revelation 2:4

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

1. **Love:** Love is sacrificial action for the good of others. Brotherly love cannot be separated from first. Love is not reciprocation, but takes initiative, sacrificial in nature and meets the real need of the object. Love is inseparable from obeying the commandments and purity in life. Love brethren is a command from the Lord and is a proof of discipleship. The command to love is a very serious one and it is the proof that we love God. Basis for true love for brethren is love God and obey God's commandment. Ephesians church had such love

Mat 22:37. Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

Joh 13:34-35. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

Rom 13:8. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Act 20:37. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him

Eph 1:15. Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints

2. **First love:** Love of the first days and the solution to this problem is to return to the first works indicate that the problem is lack of certain work. Christ expects a growth in works

Rev 2:5. 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

Rev 2:19. I know your works, love, [a]service, faith, and your [b]patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

3. Leaving the first love: Two explanations are possible:

- (a) Love of Ephesians church is decreased. But they were all believers. However, Paul warns them of people turning away and Paul is charging them correct those who are in opposition. First love is characteristic of believers and their zeal and hard work is commendable. These people were not unbeliever, but believers and their love is reduced. There is no special reason for the same can be attributed.

Eph 4:2. with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

Eph 5:2. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

1 Tim 1:5-6. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, 6 from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

2 The 3:14-15. And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

2 Tim 2:24-26. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

- (b) Members of the Ephesian church had no real faith for their love is zero. They lost their first love and warning to remove the lamp stand are strong language and they cannot be believers even if they had genuine love in the beginning. The problem with this position is that the church was commended for their labor which was difficult for unbeliever to do.

Act 20:37. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him

Eph 1:15. Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

- (c) *Conclusion:* Both position needs to be combined. Consider 40 years between Eph 1 and Rev 2. The first generation was faithful and holding on the doctrine, but the second generation hold on to orthodoxy with true love or true faith. That is the church started accommodating unbeliever and if this continue, Lord will remove the lamp stand in the sense that the church will be filled with unbeliever and it is no longer to be a true church.

1.5 Promise of the Lords return (2:5-6)

Revelation 2:5

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

1. **Remember**: Keep on remembering the former condition.
2. **From where you have fallen**: Departure from the first love is like falling from a cliff.
3. **Repentance** (*metanoeson*): change of attitude with an action that results. Means confess sins and return to the standard and will of God.
4. **Do the first works** (*prota ta erga poison*): start doing the works that accompanied the early days of the church. Love and work are intimately related, feeling may or may not come. Note that hating what Christ hate is a virtue, but does not substitute the need that motive to be based on love.
5. **Or else** (*eideme*): conveys the consequence of not heeding to this.

6. **Come to you quickly (*erchomai*)**: Reasons to point out that this is not a special visit to the church, but the second coming:

- (a) The word coming is normally referred to the second coming,
- (b) Remove lamp stand literally happened at the temple during Roman conquest. There is close connection between the temple destruction and the second coming and the removal of lamp stand,
- (c) Abandoning of first love is a characteristics of the second coming.

Mat 24:12. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

- (d) To think that Christ will come separately for the judgment invalidate the imminent return of Christ, and
- (e) To say Ephesian church no longer today fulfilling removal of lamp stand is not tenable since good churches were also removed.

Revelation 2:6

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

- 1. **But**: In spite of the loss of love, Lord introduce a serious matter in the context of His coming.

2. **Hate (miso)**: Though they left their first love, they have not left their hatred for evil which is quite different from the Pergamum. Lord Himself hate abomination and impurity

Isa 61:8. For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering; I will direct their work in truth, And will make with them an everlasting covenant.

Jer 44:4. However I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!"

Amos 5:21. "I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.

Zech 8:17. Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the Lord

3. **Nicolaitans**: Irenaeus writes them as the Nicolas of Antioch, a Jewish proselyte who said to have apostatized. This is also supported by Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine, Eusebius, etc. They were licentious (sexually unrestrained, unrestrained by moral law), antinomian (a person who maintained that Christians are freed from the moral law by virtue of the Gospel of grace) Gnostic (claimed superior knowledge of spiritual matter outside Bible) They are heretical sect, retained pagan practices and immorality, although some say it is not Nicolas, but his followers are the cause. Some also say Himenaeus and Philitus of are

Nicolatians. The wide spread charge of the early church cannot be neglected. Church has the same attitude as that of Christ which is commendable

Act 6:5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

2 Tim 2:17. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,

1.6 Command to hear and obey (2:7a)

Revelation 2:7

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

1. **Let him ...** Personal invitation to obey and is the basis for blessing of Rev 1:3. We also see similar invitation in Gospels. This invitation is to all the churches.

Rev 1:3. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Mat 11:15. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Mat 13:9. He who has ears to hear, let him hear

Mat 13:43. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Mark 4:9. And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Mark 4:23. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear

Luke 8:8. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Luke 14:15. Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God

2. **Ear:** Ability to perceive and understand. Pay special attention to what Holy Spirit says.

1.7 Promise to the over comer (2:7b)

Revelation 2:7b

To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”’

1. **Over comer:** Three view are possible: (i) some will lose salvation, (ii) special reward to some Christians, (iii) reward to all Christians.

(a) **Some will lose salvation:** The possibility of losing salvation is there

Rev 3:5. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels

Response: But Rev 3:5 does not imply Christ will erase. E.g: Like I am telling my wife that I will not divorce her is not to convey the possibility but the impossibility. Also, the rest of the Scripture teaches the eternal security and assurance of salvation. Hence this position is not tenable.

(b) **Special reward to some:** They could be martyrs or they could be more spiritual Christians. **Response:** Eating tree of life is like having eternal life and it cannot be for selected Christians

Gen 2:9. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

Gen 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"

Rev 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.

Rev 2:14. 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.

(c) **Reward to all Christians:** Sin barred the tree of life and overcoming sin give access to the tree of life. All the promises are for the believers entering kingdom.

2. **I will grant Tree of life:** Eating from the tree of life denotes granting eternal life which is a gift God is giving.

3. **Paradise**: The word has Persian roots indicating pleasure garden with wild animals. Here used as the abode of God

Luke 23:43. And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.

2 Cor 12:4. how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter

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