

06232024. As we continue in Revelation...the book so appropriate for our times. *NLT Rev 1:19* Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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 are the seven churches.

A three fold command... 1) write down what you have seen.... The glorious Jesus and his work on earth... the one in absolute charge... 2) the things going on now...which will pertain to the seven churches....to whom this book is written. 3) those things to take place after this or the now....the rest of the Revelation to the end and beyond

In verse 11 John is told who to write the book too....

ESV Rev 1:11 saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Today we start the things that are...or are now... **remember these churches are historical churches. The original message applied to them first** . The Lord in his wisdom knew that His letters to these churches and the issues they faced would echo with God’s people through the history of the church age.

Why did Jesus choose these seven ?? In the New testament there are about 30 different local churches mentioned, also there were over 500 townships in the provinces of Asia minor...or turkey, some larger than Thyatira and Philadelphia, and undoubtedly a number of them had Christian churches.. **In fact only two of the seven churches are mentioned in the rest of the New Testament Ephesus and Laodicea.**

Although the city of Thyatira is mentioned elsewhere, but not the church itself. Why not the church of Jerusalem or the church in Rome? For example.

One logical reason ... If the geographical order of presentation is followed, Beginning at Ephesus moving north to Smyrna, then farther north to Pergamum, than east to Thyatira, south to Sardis and south east to Philadelphia and then southwest to Laodicea...then back to Ephesus...a great UPS Route!!

The second and more important reason these seven were chosen because they possessed spiritual conditions that were the most representative of what Jesus wanted to address as whole. The issues they faced would echo with God's people through the history of the church age.

These seven churches appear as Lampstands arranged in a circle, with Jesus in the center as He should be! **He is pictured as the one who gives light and life to the lampstands and knows everything that is happening IN and TO the churches....**the churches reflect His light and shine light into the darkness of this world.

Also personally known to John and he personally had oversight of them...

These churches are a lot like people no two are exactly alike. They come in different sizes and each have their own unique strengths and weakness. Each resides in a different location and context with their own blend of people within their congregation. This is true in the first century and is true in the 21st century.

So Jesus message to each one was different. Each letter was directed to the needs or problems that existed in each congregation....

Seven is the number of completion of totality ...so these seven churches the totality of the basis kinds of churches that will always be present on earth during the entire church age. Some of each are in every church to some degree...I wonder what is in ours?

Some also believe each church represents a certain church age...this can be a stretch in my opinion...but might be worth examiningbut not today.

So we will stay with the seven real churches that all existed at the same time...**Let jump into chapter 2 and 3 The seven churches...**

NLT Rev 2:1 “Write this letter to the **angel** of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one **who holds the seven stars** in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

- The letter was addressed to the angel or messenger...either an angel or someone who would deliver the message...here it seems messenger as the Lord differentiates between the stars...and this messenger.
- A little about the city of Ephesus...
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- **Ephesus, on the south-west coast of modern Turkey, embodied a fertile synthesis of architecture and culture. Ephesus was a center of travel and commerce with its one of the greatest seaports of the ancient world. The great port created a big city with over 250,000 inhabitants in Ephesus during the Roman time. Ephesus was the most prominent city in the Roman province of Asia and had already a long history of Christian pedigree mainly gentile in makeup**
- **In 356BC the Greeks built the Artemesium (a colossal Ionic temple dedicated to Artemis the fertility goddess also known as Diana) which was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. During the 2nd century BC,**
- **The Celsus Library in Ephesus was the third largest library with the capacity of 12,000 scrolls The Grand Theatre in Ephesus has seating capacity of 24000 and a high of 125 feet**
Ephesus was also the home to a very large medical school.
- **Because of the excellent sea port in Ephesus, city was a major trade-link and three major roads led out of the city, one road went south, another east, a third to the north, all transporting goods to the Asian interior.**

- One of the famous early philosophers Heraclitus was born in and made his home in Ephesus.
- **To this city Paul would journey in 52AD** on his second missionary journey in Acts 18:19-21 Ephesus –during his absence he left a well known couple to minister *Priscilla and Aquila. Known as excellent teachers..*
- And on his third missionary journey 55AD Paul returns to Ephesus and stays about 3 years one of the longest church planting stays of his ministry... The Ephesians church mainly consisted of Gentile Believers He loved the Ephesians...
- **Paul is imprisoned in Rome as he writes to the Ephesian church 13 years later...** This epistle was probably written around 63 A.D. and is unique among the epistles...for it is mainly about Doctrine! he had already been on house arrest for two years...
- Timothy the recipient of Paul's letter to this young Pastor who Pastored in Ephesus... Timothy remained in Ephesus for the rest of his life,
- Paul wrote two New Testament letters to Timothy instructing him on leadership in the early church. He told Timothy to remain strong in sound doctrine, guard the good deposit entrusted to him, and set an example for other believers in speech, conduct, love, faithfulness, and purity (1 Timothy 4:6-16, 6:11-16; 2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2:1-3). Paul wanted to make sure the next generation of leaders carried on the true gospel message after he was gone.
- Timothy took up this challenge. So this church has been in existence close to 40 years...truly a second generation church...
- He was also encouraged \from Paul to be ware of false teaches and those who use faith to gain wealth...

ESV 2 Tim 1:13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

*ESV 2 Tim 1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,^[a] who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share **in suffering as** a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

- History tells Timothy ministered in Ephesus and confronted the pagans there who worshipped the goddess Artemis. When Timothy tried to stop a festival procession dedicated to Artemis, the pagan priests and worshippers became furious. They beat Timothy, dragged him through the streets, and then stoned him to death ...
- He was martyred for his faith. [*Foxe's Book of Martyrs*](#) states that Timothy's death occurred in AD 97 during the reign of [*Domitian*](#) (Claxton, 1881, p. 20).
- **So Timothy Timothy served under both under Paul and John**

So it is fitting when Jesus commends the Ephesians ...

NLT Rev 2:2 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. ³ You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

Now His complaint... I have this against you...you fall short here..

⁴ "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first!

Faith was not their issues...they had worked hard in faith and endured by faith... they have fought the good fight of Faith!

The word was not a problem...sold out to it...held onto sound words or doctrine...and admonished those who taught falsehoods...and used religion to gain wealth...

- Along the way they abandoned the love part of the relationship... they had a Heart problem...abandoned means it was different in the beginning ... they had emotional connection!
- **Thirteen years after PAUL FOUNDED THE COMMUNITY around 63AD...HE WRITE IN HIS LETTER TO THEM THIS....**

NLT Eph 1:15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly...

30 plus years later Jesus writes them this...around 95AD

NLT Rev 2:4 "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! ⁵ Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first

What started in love and has become cold heartedness....you have become hard living in a dark place...you are more interested in fighting the darkness...then loving me , eachother and the lost.

The love mentioned here is agape love... Agape describes a different kind of love. It is a love more of *decision* it chooses to love the undeserving. Agape really doesn't have much to do with feelings - it has to do with decisions....it is the way God loves the world...in general...by world he means people...saved and unsaved...

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life

- **Agape love gives and loves because it wants to;** it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given. It gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive
- **The word has little to do with emotion; it has much to do with self-denial for the sake of another.**
- **It is a love that loves without changing, It is a love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment.**
- **It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing.**
- **It is love that loves even when it is rejected.**

Agape love therefore is a attitude by which one deliberately lives” (New Testament Words, p. 21).

*****Marriage is the highest compliment and form of agape love you can give to another person ... The exchange of vows at a wedding, is your word to love...by a choice of the will...when we say I do and I will... my word to agape you**

- **This is God's word to you...it is part of the fullness the Triune God toward us!!**

Then he writes....

NLT Rev 2:5 *Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.*

They had theology right and hated evil behavior...but abandoned loving the person

Lets see how far they have fallen: as summed up in 1 Cor 13

1 Corinthians 13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 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 do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- **agape love is greater than all for it continues beyond all thing...even faith and hope...**

He says repent...and turn back ...or you will lose you candle stick...you will not be a light any longer to the lost...you will lose your ability to influence....your attractiveness...

Then Jesus adds this : there is something to hate and you choose correctly....

NLT Rev 2:6 But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

- This is the first of two times the Nicolaitans are mentioned...in the messages to the churches... **So who are the Nicolaitans? And what were their works that both the church and God hated?**

1. The Nicolaitans as the name implies...Greek:*nikos* (to conquer or overcome, victory) and *laos* (the people)it is believed the Nicolaitans fostered a great division between clergy and laity in the church. Clergy greater people lessor...

2. The Nicolaitans were also for sure a cultish group that followed Nicolaus of Antioch, one of the seven apostles assistants mentioned in acts 6:5

*NLT Acts 6:*³ *And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.* ⁴ *Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”* ⁵ *Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith).*

But something happened in his latter years...Church History teaches that later Nicolaus apostatized... we don't know much about their doctrines...but we know their practices Irenaeus, Tertuulian, Jerome , Agustine, Eusebius among others all give testimony of his falling away...

- **It is claimed that his error and the group following him practiced the ways of Balaam and Jezebel...idolatry and sexual immorality...**

*NLT Rev 2:*¹⁴ *“But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.”* ¹⁵ *In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching.*

NLT Rev 2:20 “But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.

- **The great historian and commentator William Barclay summarizes their practices well...**“The Nicolaitians were not prepared to be different; they were the most dangerous of all the heretics from a practical point of view, **for if their teaching had been successful, the world would have changed Christianity and not Christianity the world**”
- **These are instructive words for us today in our churches as well...Who is changing whom?**

17 times these words are used in Revelation...

⁷ “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying **to the churches**. To **everyone** who is **victorious** I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

- **The seven fold spirit speaks...to the churches but he is speaking to everyone... everyone who is victorious...that is the believers...How Because if we claim Jesus...we are victorious...and we have eternal life...access to the tree of life**
- ESV 1 John 5: 4* For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- John describes a victorious Christian is a believer in Jesus Christ...who detest evil but loves people...**

NLT Matt 22:36 “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” ³⁷ Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God

with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. '[e]' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' '[f]' 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments. "

A note of as regarding the church of Ephesus. It did lose its light ..how great it had fallen that of course was tragically happened in the fifth century...the city now uninhabited is one of the important ruins in that area...

***Never forget the church of individuals...who first and foremost love God each other and the lost... that is the light the world must see...
End***

Also remember these churches are historical churches. The original message applied to them first.

- ESV1Tim 6:3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound^[b] words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, ⁴ he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, ⁵ and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and^[c] we cannot take anything out of the world.
- ¹¹ But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith.
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- This would place Timothy's martyrdom shortly after the exile of the apostle John to the island of Patmos, which occurred around AD 95. The strongest evidence we have about Timothy's death comes from the apocryphal Acts of Timothy, dated to around the mid-2nd century AD. This document claims that history tells Timothy ministered in Ephesus and confronted the pagans there who worshipped the goddess Artemis. When Timothy tried to stop a festival procession dedicated to Artemis, the pagan priests and worshippers became furious. They beat Timothy, dragged him

through the streets, and then stoned him to death (Acts of Timothy 4-5). So he and John apparently knew each other....

- **Paul visited Ephesus around 52ad during his second missionary journey. Paul is imprisoned in Rome as he writes to the Ephesian church 13 years later... This epistle was probably written around 63 A.D. he had already been on house arrest for two years...**

- **Did you know that The Virgin Mary lived her last years of her life in Turkey, here in a small cottage near Ephesus?**
- **the first advertisement of antiquity, which shows the way to the brothel, on Marbel Street in Ephesus?**

- **Important items of trade around the Mediterranean were olive oil, animals, glass, stone such as marble, tiles etc, wine, grain, pottery vessels, metals such as iron, copper, lead, gold, tin etc and slaves.**
- **The Celsus Library in Ephesus was the third largest library with the capacity of 12,000 scrolls after the Alexandra and Pergamum?**

and the first church dedicated to Virgin Mary is in Ephesus?

- **Ephesus is the best preserved classical city of the Eastern Mediterranean, and among the best places in the world enabling one to genuinely soak in the atmosphere of Roman times?**
- **Christians in Ephesus would identify themselves to one another in with the sign of the fish which is iktus in Greek and Christians used the sign of the fish as a short hand for a phrase in which each word represented one letter of iktus 'Jesus Christ God's Son Savior' ?**