

Revelation 2:1-11 In The Last Days

John Walvoord 'Many of the evils and short comings which exist in the church today are a direct outgrowth of neglect of the solemn instruction given to these seven churches'

1:19 key to interpretation **1**-things seen (glorified Christ) **2**-things which are (church age)--three fold application. Conditions in church at that time.

Seven periods of church history--each church. Contemporary conditions w/in church today & past generations. **3**--after these things--

metatauta—Prophecies---Anti-Christ to coming of Jesus Christ Ch 4-22

7 churches - # of completeness, a complete picture of church (*more existed*)—Jesus as judge—warns/encourages, rebukes/promises, commends/condemns. He exposes truth, facts & reality--*good & bad*.

Structure: **To**...name/church – **From**...trait of glorified Lord from ch 1
Subject: problems/praise He has w/ each church & pastor-good & bad.

Pattern: All same—**1**-to messenger of church=Pastor. **2**-significant trait of glorified Christ relating to particular church. **3**-names church '*I*

know....'nothing is hid from His sight but all things are open & laid bare to the eyes of Him w/ whom we have to do' Heb 4:13 **4**-heart of the message, criticism or praise. **5**-closes alluding to His soon return. **6**-to church as whole or individuals in particular. **Last** of all a promise to overcomers.

1"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 lampstands, says this: 2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 4 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 'Remember therefore 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. 6 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.'

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30 years earlier before John wrote Revelation Paul feared & warned the young church at Ephesus *'savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock & from among your own selves men will arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves'* Act 20:29

It is possible to be so consumed w/ protecting the flock from wolves & false teaching we are oblivious to the greatest threat—drifting away from Gods love-distracted/careless---gone from where began. *'greatest of all is love'*

Ephesus church: Doctrine purity, false teachers exposed, hard working, looking for Christ return, strong witness, enough to make a *pastor proud*.

What looks successful from outside has problems inside...they have left *not lost* first love—departed from. God sees what we don't....we only see what we like--7 fold commendation

God is concerned where we are headed not where we've been or where we think we're at now. He's concerned w/ our direction. *Illus Luxury cruise of lifetime but voyage ends w/ ship plunging to watery grave the good times turn out to be empty experiences*.

Church may be on spiritual high w/ many commendations but if it's headed to a loveless future because it' left *first love* it needs to change course & get back on track. Going thru motions of religion w/o emotion of love for Lord is nothing *1Cor 13:1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*

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How does it happen? **Discouragement** thinking bad circumstances mean God is against us, He has let us down...**Devil confirms**...so leave 1st love.

Imperceptible drift..Other things consume our time....not bad things just important things...job, school, family, projects, career, relocation, fun

Oblivious busyness...Jesus priorities slip...busy preparing, studying, visiting, working for the Lord, doing Gods business...**suck straw-empty**

Willful leaving...trial comes & you rebel....it to strengthen not destroy. **Root of bitterness springs and defiles**. Sun soften wax/hardens clay-**sin over savior**

Jer 2:2 "Go & proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown.....13"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water. Yes Jesus living water Jn 4:14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."'; 7:37....out of innermost being shall gush forth torrents living water...Holy Spirit

Reason for leaving may vary—way back to **first love** is the same.

Remember—place of departure...at what point you slacked off, got lazy, distracted & left devotion to Lord in pursuit of other things.

Repent—turn away and turnaround from the place of departure & head back to place of **first love**. Don't just feel bad but do something about it...

Return—Come back to place you left, come back to first love. You can do it. Satan says 'too late' 'no hope for you' 'you've gone too far' he lies. God says yes return, I am for you, will help you...**all who come unto me in no way will I cast out'**

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Repeat—Do again those things you did when the first bloom of God’s love got a hold of your life...first devotions do all over again...stir up the joy you had...excitement reading word....prayer times....meditation, devotions, journaling, Super energy up late talking about Jesus, fellowship, singing making melody in heart, scriptures posted, surfing w/ Lord. Let Jesus be master passion of life all over again. Become a child again.

If not I’m leaving..God won’t stay in a loveless church. Not loss of salvation but loss of the sense of God’s presence--dead, dry religious experience w/o overflow of HS. You’ve quenched & grieved Him.

Value of any church is the Lord’s presence there & w/o Him it is not church but only a social religious club...2x’s ‘repent’

Nicolaitians – *nico*-priesthood, *laity*-people – followers of Nicolas ‘conqueror of the people’ 3 Jn 9 *Diotrephes* Lording over people-forerunner to religious hierarchy--go thru clergy/priest to get to God. We need to hate what God hates. Apostolic age up to 100 AD

Hear w/ intent to obey two trees 1-life 2-knowledge-God transplants **Rev 22**
New Jerusalem bears 12 kinds fruits, leaves healing / health lit ‘*promotion of super abundant enjoyment of life*’

Tree of life Gen 2:9 – Rev 22:1,2 not eternal life but a benefit, a reward in addition to eternal life ‘*therapy*’

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.’

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Smyrna – Myrrh or bitter – named after main export used as embalming spice in burial wrappings. Jesus at birth – myrrh-frankincense, -gold – signified His bitter death. To be effective must be crushed—Jesus pierced, crushed for our iniquities Is53:5

Churches name suggest suffering, crushed, persecuted yet spiritually rich.

Jesus id w/ **:8 first and last, dead and alive**’ to those facing death *Jn 11 25 “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Jesus conquered death.*

In mill reign only gold & frankincense **Is 60:6** Gold metal of **kings** Frank of **priest** – church Smyrna rep age of persecution by Rome **95 AD to 312 AD** *‘all who live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’*

Nero is said to *‘have nicely refined the art of cruelty and contrived all manner of punishments for his victims’*—sewed animal skins; shirts soaked in wax and lit. Historical records Polycarp pastor Smyrna martyred 10 days—symbol of general persecution from Nero to Galerius 6 mil

Oxymoron ‘know tribulation and poverty but you rich—*Rom 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 2Cor 6:10 ‘sorrowful yet rejoicing’*

Persecuted from w/o Blasphemed from w/in Satan has his minions in church who downgrade Christ’ & gospel. *Who are Jews but synagogue of Satan*. Believers in **Jehovah** but not Jesus...*Jn 8:44 You are of your father the devil, & you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, & does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar & the father of lies.*

What were they doing? Legalism-Christ is not enough—circumcision, Law baptism, Sabbath--today those claim Christ & lay trips on-**greater spirituality**

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10) *Be faithful receive crown of life* for suffering saints—not just die for **but** live for. *Ja 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

He who overcomes not hurt second death. F/S arena wild beasts--*hurt swift moment....*

Second death raised back to life facing eternal judgment—lost--excluded from presence Lord. *Lk 12:4.5 “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5“But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!*

Born once, **die twice**--born twice, **die once** – Christian sleeps--absent body present Lord. **Second death** Rev 20:6; 13-15 *Blessed & holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the **second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the **lake of fire.***

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Today 360 million Christians persecuted 5,898 killed 2022 worst Afghanistan, N Korea, Somalia, Libya, Yemen (**Open Doors ministry**)

7, 11 *he who has ears to hear....let him hear what the spirit says to...me* and you and the church