

Message to the church at Ephesus

Rev. 2:1-7

During a time of tribulation and impending persecution in the first century, Jesus' message went out to the seven churches situated in Asia Minor [present day western Turkey] by way of consolation, comfort, and warning; to strengthen and encourage them to remain faithful to Him till the very end. The churches were situated in hostile environment among Gentiles. The "seven churches" signify types of churches as a whole to whom the messages of Jesus are addressed.

The message to the church at Ephesus is found in Revelation 2:1-7. Jesus presents himself as the One "who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" (2:1). In Rev 1:20 Jesus reveals that "**The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands ... are the seven churches.**" Angels refer to messengers. Jesus is in charge and control of His churches everywhere.

He always knows what each church and individual Christians are thinking, saying, feeling, and doing. So, at the outset of the message Jesus says: "I know." He lets the Christians at Ephesus know that He is aware of their –

- Labour and patience;
- Abhorrence of those who are evil and the deeds of the Nicolaitans (2:1, 6);
- Testing of liars who claimed to be apostles; (2:2) (cf. 1 John 4:1-3);
- Patient perseverance in their Christian calling (2:3);
- Tireless labour for the Lord's name's sake.

From these qualities we may be led to conclude that the church at Ephesus was a model church. However, in spite of their faithful and patient endurance and tireless labour for the Lord, Jesus finds this to say to them: "**Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love**" (2:4). This implies that the church was serving Christ out of a sense of duty rather than out of love for Him. Even though the intent was right, the motive was wrong.

Jesus reminds the church of its plight and exhorts it to repent with the grim warning that if it didn't do His bidding, He would come quickly and remove its lampstand from its place.

Jesus concludes His message to the Ephesians with a promise and reward : “**To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.**”

Lesson: As Christians, both our intent and motive should be right. Love for Christ and our fellow human beings should form the basis of our life and service unto the Lord. Then we would truly be following in His footsteps.

-Thomas R. Dohling.