

Revelation 2:1-7. *Ephesus—good stuff, bad stuff*. Have the messenger<sup>8</sup> to the church at Ephesus write this:

These words are from the perfect One, the Christ who walks among you. He knows your deeds and the perseverance which supports your hard work. He knows you cannot tolerate the wicked, and that you have investigated those who claim to be apostles, but are not actually messengers. You have declared them false. You have persevered, endured hardship for My sake—you have endured. But...

You have lost your first love. You started off well, from lofty heights as it were, but now? You have fallen. Turn around, do what you did at first. If you do not turn around, I will come and remove the blessing of My presence. I will say



this for you, however, you have fought the Nicolaitans<sup>9</sup> who I also despise.

So? If you can hear, listen to what the Spirit says. When you overcome, I will give you eternal life—yes, you will have the right to eat from the tree of life, yes, the tree in the paradise garden of the Lord God!

- Q Is the entity of the church in Ephesus heavenly or earthly?
- Q Where was this messenger/angel to which John refers in 2:1? So?
- Q What examples of Nicolaitianism do you see today among American Christians?
- Q What is the result of listening to what Holy Spirit says, according to the Christ? Why did the freedom to eat change?

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<sup>8</sup>The word “angel” can be used here. Context determines whether the writer is referring to heavenly beings or earthly entities. The Greek is *áγγελος* [ἄγγελος] “... a messenger or delegate – either human (Mt 11:10; Lk 7:24, 9:52; Gal 4:14; Js 2:25) or heavenly (a celestial *angel*); someone *sent* (by God) to proclaim His message.” See [BibleHub.com/Greek/32.htm](http://BibleHub.com/Greek/32.htm), as downloaded 11/8/2024.

<sup>9</sup>Nicolaitans were a sect of the early church who had worked out some socially acceptable compromises with pagan social norms. Modern manifestations of Nicolaitianism include Americans who believe America is blessed uniquely by the Lord God, or that the pagan holiday of Saturnalia can be used blamelessly to celebrate the birth of the Christ as Jesus of Nazareth. Nicolaitans taught that spiritual liberty gave them sufficient leeway to practice idolatry and immorality. In other words, if you are “good enough,” some rules do not apply. Today many Christians believe their work for “the Christian cause” gives them higher status with the Lord God. [See Jesus rejection of that notion in His teaching regarding who is served first, the master or the slave; see Luke 17:7-10.] A similar group at Pergamum held the teaching of Balaam (verses 14-15), and some at Thyatira were even followers of the woman Jezebel (verse 20).

## REVELATION 2:1-7

To the angel [*messenger*] of the church in **Ephesus** write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup>I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. <sup>3</sup>You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

<sup>4</sup>Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. <sup>5</sup>Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. <sup>6</sup>But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit [“the” is there] says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:8-11. *Smyrna—be encouraged*. Have the messenger to the church at Smyrna proclaim this:

These words are from the Alpha and the Omega, the One who died, yet came to life again. I understand your pain, your poverty—yet remember you are rich! You have been lied about by those who say they are good followers of Jesus, but are not. They are a synagogue of Satan himself!

Do not be afraid of what you are going to suffer shortly. Satan will put you in prison, just to see if you can pass the test. You will be tested, suffering persecution for ten days. Be trusting, even to death itself, and I will give you the crown of life!

If you can hear, listen to the Spirit! He who overcomes will not, will not, will not be hurt at all by the second death.

- Q Why does the Christ “know our afflictions?” Why does Holy Spirit “know our afflictions?”
- Q What slander do believers often promulgate against other believers? Jesus calls these slanderers here a “synagogue of Satan.”



- Q What are the prisons believers in the Christ must endure? How do this incarceration affect the Christian life?
- Q Of what are we not to be afraid, according Jesus the Christ?
- Q How long must we trust the Christ? Must we be in fact “faithful unto death,” as He also said in Mark 13:13?
- Q What is this “second death” about which the church at Smyrna, and us, will overcome?

## REVELATION 2:8-11

To the angel [*messenger*] of the church in **Smyrna** write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. <sup>9</sup>I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup>Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

<sup>11</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.