

Revelation Chapter Two

“The Things Which Are”

(Chapters 2 & 3)

To Ephesus (vv. 1-7)

VERSE 1 "To the angel [messenger] of the church in Ephesus write (Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον· [*noun dat.m.s. angelos messenger; angel + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ekklesia + prep en + noun loc.f.s. Ephesus + aor.act.imper.2.s. grapho write*]): **The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this** [Γὰρ λέγει ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν· [*adj.pro..acc.nt.p. tode “these things” focuses on something about to be said with lego it is the direct object; + pres.act.ind.3s. lego say: “says this” translated by the NAS at the end of the verse; but it should better come first and be rendered “says these things”+ art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. krateo take hold of + art.w/adj.acc.m.p. hepta seven + noun acc.m.p. aster star + prep en + art.w/adj.loc.f.s. dezios right (hand) + pro.gen.m.s. autos his + art.w/pres.act.part.nom.m.s. peripateo walks around + prep en + adj.dat.nt.s. mesos middle; “midst” + art.w/adj.gen.f.p.hepta seven + noun gen.f.p. luchia lampstand + art.w/adj.gen.f.p. chrusous golden*]):

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. Each of the seven letters begins with Jesus Christ presenting one or more aspects of His celebrityship.
2. Except for the Christological introduction to the church in Philadelphia (3:7), these aspects are taken from the vision in chapter one.
3. All seven letters were dictated to John and addressed to the respective pastors of the seven churches.
4. The translation “to the angel” is misleading, as it would be strange, to say the least, to address a letter to an invisible spirit being.
5. Furthermore, how could this book be delivered to seven angels, and how would they related the contents to the seven churches?
6. The Greek term *angelos* has as its primary meaning “messenger.”
7. Of the 175 times this noun occurs in the NT, only 13 times it is used in the sense of a messenger (Matt.11:10//Mk.1:2//Lk.7:27; Lk.7:24; 9:52; Jam.2:25; Rev.2-3 (x); the other instances are of angels.
8. The seven messengers correspond to the symbolism of the seven stars and to the singular participle in chapter one verse 3: “Blessed is he who reads...”
9. The singular supports the doctrine of the singular pastor-teacher of each assembly.
10. Ephesus was a crossroads of civilization.
11. It had become the de facto capital of the province, known as “Supreme Metropolis of Asia.”

12. The Roman governor resided there.
13. It was a “free” city, i.e., self-governed.
14. Located on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the convergence of three great highways, from the north, east, and south.
15. Ephesus was the trade center of the area.
16. It has been called “The Vanity Fair of the Ancient World” (William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches* [New York: Abingdon, 1957]. p. 12).
17. Religiously, Ephesus was the center for the worship of the fertility “bee” goddess known in the Greek as “Artemis,” or Romanized as “Diana” (Acts 19:23ff.).
18. The temple with its statue of Artemis was one of the wonders of the ancient world.
19. Thousands of priests and priestesses were involved in her service.
20. Many of the priestesses were dedicated to cult prostitution.
21. The temple also served as a great bank for kings and merchants, as well as an asylum for fleeing criminals.
22. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “The darkness of the temple altar in Ephesus is the darkness of vileness; the morals of the temple are worse than the morals of animals, for even promiscuous dogs do not mutilate each other; the worshippers of Diana are fit only to be drowned.”
23. It was the residence of the apostle John before and after his exile to Patmos.
24. Paul and his traveling companions Aquila and Priscilla stopped in Ephesus briefly on his 2nd missionary journey and evangelized in the Jewish synagogue, leaving with a promise to return (Acts 18:19-21).
25. The Ephesian church was founded by Paul on his third missionary journey, where he stayed for about three years (Acts 19:8-10).
26. From there Christianity spread throughout all of Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).
27. Paul wrote the epistle to the Ephesians from his 1st Roman imprisonment.
28. During his 2nd Roman imprisonment Paul wrote 1st and 2nd Timothy.
29. After Paul, Timothy was the pastor in Ephesus (1Tim.1:3).
30. A quarter of a century later John is in charge of this canon.
31. The author of the letter to each of these churches was Christ who directed John to write what he heard.
32. John was no more than a scribe, dictating each of the letters under the supervision of God the Holy Spirit, after he had received the contents of the vision, which comprise the book of Revelation.
33. Christ directed John to “write” each letter and see that it was delivered to the pastor-teacher (e.g., “*angelos*”) of each of the seven churches.
34. Each letter presents the addressee first; viz., “To the messenger of the church write...”
35. Then the speaker is introduced.
36. In each instance, some aspect of the great vision of Christ and of His self-identification (1:12-20) is repeated as the speaker (Christ) identifies Himself; e.g., “the one who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands (2:1; cf. 1:13, 16).
37. This identification is preceded in each case with the significant declaration “says these things” (NAS has “says this :”).
38. *Tade* (“these things”) is the direct object of the main verb (*lego*), which is a present active indicative 3rd singular.

39. “These things” refers to the body of the letter to Ephesus.
40. The verb “says” requires a subject; which is designated by “the One who holds” (*ho kraton*), and “the One who walks” (*ho peripaton*).
41. Christ identifies himself to the church at Ephesus as “the one who holds the seven stars in His right hand...”
42. In relationship to the pastor the imagery denotes authority, protection, and blessing.
43. The symbolism of the stars and the lampstands is given by Christ in 1:20.
44. That the stars are held together indicates that what is true for one is true for all pastors.
45. The supreme authority of the local church is under the control of Christ for good and for ill.
46. The second part of the description, e.g., “who walks among the seven golden lampstands,” suggests the Lord’s tireless activity with respect to local churches, emphasizing His omnipresence as per Matt. 28:20b: “and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”
47. As with the imagery of the stars, what is apropos for one local church is the divine standard for all bonafide local churches in this dispensation.

Commendation (vv. 2-3)

VERSE 2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance (Οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ τὸν κόπον καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου [*perf.act.ind.1s. oida know + art.w/acc.nt.p. ergon work, deed + pro.gen.2s. su + conj and + art.w/noun acc.ms. kopos labor + conj and + art.w/noun acc.f.s. hupomone patience, endurance + pro.gen.2s. su*], **and that you cannot tolerate evil men** [*καὶ ὅτι οὐ δύνη βαστάσαι κακούς, [conj and + conj hoti that + neg ou + pres.dep.ind.2s. dunamai be able + aor.act.infin. bastazo lift up; endure, put up with + adj.acc.m.p. kakos evil “evil men”]*], **and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles** [*καὶ ἐπίρασας τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς ἀποστόλους [conj and + aor.act.ind.2s. peirazo put to the test + art.w/pres.act.part.acc.m.p. lego say; “those who call” + reflex.pro heautos “themselves” + noun acc.m.p. apostolos apostle]*], **and they are not, and you found them to be false** [*καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν καὶ εὔρες αὐτοὺς ψευδεῖς, [conj and + neg ou + pres.act.ind.3p. eimi “they are not” + aor.act.ind.2s. eurisko find + pro.acc.m.3p. autos he; “them” + adj.acc.m.p. pseudes false]*];

VERSE 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary (*καὶ ὑπομονήν ἔχεις καὶ ἐβάστασας διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐ κεκοπίακες. [conj and + noun acc.f.s. hupomone + pres.act.ind.2s. echo have + conj and + aor.act.ind.2s. bastazo lift up; endure + prep dia causal + art.w/acc.nt.s. onoma name + pro.gen.1s. ego + conj and + neg ou + perf.act.ind.2s. kopiao become weary or tired; give up (Rev. 2:3)]*).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 2-3

1. The speaker's knowledge (Christ's) includes awareness of their corporate activity, their discernment of evil, and their patient suffering.
2. Their "deeds," their "hard work" (*kopos*, "wearisome toil"), and their "patience"/"perseverance" of verse 2 are underscored by the statement of verse 3, "you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary" (v.3).
3. "Deeds" refer to divine good production in general.
4. "Toil" refers to strenuous and exhausting activity as in "hard work."
5. "Patience" refers to the corporate body's willingness to acclimate to all manner of CHPs (common human problems).
6. Anything that required patience, they proved themselves to be the equal to.
7. The Lord commends them in particular for their doctrinal discernment in verse 2.
8. They refuse to tolerate false teachers who promoted themselves as apostles.
9. This test above all others is singled out for special commendation.
10. The "evil men" were false brethren who "called themselves apostles."
11. We do not know precisely who these individuals were, what they espoused, or how the church tested them.
12. An "apostle" is one who is sent as a representative of another and bears the full authority of the sender (TDNT, 1:421).
13. The word is used of the original circle of the Twelve (Mk.3:14; Acts 1:2, 26), who had a special place in the historical foundation of the church (Eph.2:20; Rev.21:14).
14. Paul was chosen to be an apostle as Judas' replacement (Acts 9; Gal.1:1).
15. This term was also used of other individuals as well: Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James the brother of Jesus (Gal.1:19).
16. This second tier of individuals was not of the same stature as the final Twelve as only these men are inscribed on the twelve foundations of the New Jerusalem.
17. We should reject out of hand anyone today claiming to be an apostle (like the Pope, etc.).
18. As things stand, there is no basis for any one man having authority over churches outside one's immediate canon.
19. Towards the end of the apostolic era there was less and less a chance of legitimacy among those who made this claim.
20. The Ephesians rightly tested and found wanting these pretenders.
21. We at Maranatha Church do not allow anyone to teach from our pulpit as this violates the spirit and letter of John chapter ten.
22. As to whether or not the authoritative function of apostles continued after the first century, the 2nd century authorities are instructive.
23. In no case do the many references to apostles in the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermes relate to any recognized apostles than those mentioned in the NT.
24. These men apparently understood the gift and office of apostle ceased with the end of the apostolic era.
25. About fifteen years later than John's writing of Revelation, Ignatius commended the church of Ephesus for refusing to give a "home" to any heresy (*To the Ephesians* 6, 7, 9, 16).
26. Thyatira had failed (2:20ff.), but the Ephesians had held their ground in the face of the false teachers and teachings.
27. They had taken to heart Paul's prophetic warning in Acts 20:28-30.

28. The Ephesians excelled in this particular aspect of divine good production.
29. In spite of the demonic spirit of ecumenicalism that pervades Christianity today and has even infiltrated doctrinally based ministries, there is no place for dropping our doctrinal guard in the face of pressures from within or from without.
30. We have the full blessing and authority of God to “put to the test” any would-be teacher and his teachings.
31. If individuals, who might come our way, are to receive acceptance in our assembly, they must be tested, in order to determine what they really believe.
32. We should take comfort in the fact the many find us intolerant.
33. We should take a hard line against those who contradict the doctrines of separation, right-pastor/right-congregation, not to mention other truths and practices that set us apart from the fundies.
34. Again, in verse 3, Christ reiterates the fact of this church’s application in the face of adversity and opposition.
35. The first clause speaks to their continued steadfastness.
36. It is a present indicative (*echo*) followed by the noun “perseverance.”
37. The 2nd verbal clause “and have endured” looks to their past as this is an aorist indicative.
38. The verb *bastazo* means to “put up with” and is here used of bearing a heavy responsibility.
39. This verb is also found in the previous verse with the negative (“cannot bear”), and is used of that which they would not put up with, namely impostures.
40. This clause also contains the phrase “for My name’s sake.”
41. They upheld in the face of contradiction that which Christ attaches His reputation to, namely the integrity of Bible doctrine.
42. The third verb “have not become weary” is a perfect indicative (*kopiao*), which corresponds to their tenacity in the struggle to remain doctrinally pure.
43. Their service in the cause of truth was tireless.
44. They did not soul-faint in the face of corporate difficulties.
45. They did not allow their circumstances or the derision of the outside world to discourage them (size, resources, being nondescript, etc.).
46. No matter how heavy their burden or how long the journey, they stuck with the integrity of the plan.

Condemnation (v.4)

VERSE 4 'But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love (*ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφῆκες*. [*conj alla but + pres.act.ind.1s. echo have + prep kata against + pro.gen.2s. su + conj hoti that + art.w/noun acc.f.s. agape love + art.w/adj.acc.f.s. protos first + aor.act.ind.2s. aphiemi leave, abandon, forsake*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. The speaker (Christ) acts as “the faithful witness” by proceeding from commendation to condemnation.
2. Much had been accomplished at Ephesus by resisting the seduction of apostolic pretenders, works, hard work, patience, and endurance, but there was a major blemish on their record.
3. They had “forsaken [their] first love.”

4. The condemnation of the corporate assembly is introduced by, “But I have *something* against you.”
5. The defect was not trivial.
6. The verb “forsaken” (aorist ind. *Aphiemi* reject, abandon, leave behind, neglect) is a strong word.
7. It is used in connection with divorce (Matt.19:81Cor.7:11,12); leaving something behind (Matt.4:20), etc.
8. The object of the verb is “love” with the definite article, followed by the restrictive adjective “first” also with the article.
9. “First” carries the ideas of “first” as to time, foremost as to position, and best as to quality.
10. In verse 5 the church is commanded “to do the first works” as a part of the recovery process.
11. This then, is a clue as to what the meaning of “first love” is.
12. In other words, certain works must be engaged in.
13. Their “first works” takes them back to the very beginning of their Christian experience when Paul first arrived on the scene.
14. Obviously in their early years they were the recipients of solid doctrinal instruction.
15. In the years that followed they did not abandon those teachings and remained orthodox in doctrine.
16. But something gradually happened to their early zeal.
17. And that something is reflected in their approach to their Christian duties that brought this indictment against them.
18. Their early zeal and ardor for the application of BD waned.
19. This charge makes it clear to all believers that it is possible to maintain a high level of orthodoxy and yet fail to demonstrate the same zeal for the things of God that once characterized their corporate and personal lives.
20. The church had witnessed the full blown apostolic era under the spectacular gifts.
21. They lived at the close of that era and the glamour of those days were but a memory.
22. Even the intake of Bible doctrine had become a routine.
23. The pastor-teacher and the flock were not as animated with the joy and challenge of it all.
24. So the church had moved away from its early zeal, while remaining overtly active and orthodox.
25. They did not exhibit the same qualities of motivation in their application as they had in those formative years.
26. A local church cannot rest on its past laurels; it must consistently strive to move ahead as new challenges are presented from the pulpit.
27. The only way this can be done is if the pastor is continually breaking new ground.
28. His pulpit presence is a real key to the motivation of the flock.
29. To lose one’s zeal for application is a precursor for losing one’s zeal for doctrine itself.
30. This loss of zeal will eventually led to the watering down of the content.
31. The individual believer has arrived at this state when the excitement of face-to-face teaching fades and with it the motivation to apply under one’s spiritual gift(s).
32. If believers are getting bored with the same old manna day in and day out, then this is an indication of losing their first love.
33. It is easy to fall into the trap with so many distractions such as movies, TV, sports, shopping, travel, fads, etc.
34. Another danger is to think that we already do enough.

35. We should never lose our focus on SG3.
36. Fellowship in doctrine is replaced with fellowship in some activity.
37. Such fellowship becomes a hollow experience for those looking for edification and encouragement.
38. There will come times when we will let our guard down and lose focus and intensity.
39. In order to avoid this paralysis, we must fight to regain that early zeal of discovery and application.
40. We must fight through laziness and distraction.
41. While it is commendable that we align ourselves with a doctrinally straight ministry, we don't want to be caught short because of our lack of zeal in application.
42. This warning is to all doctrinally based ministries to evaluate themselves as to the zeal factor.
43. The content factor needs to be coupled with the zeal factor.
44. Lack of zeal is reflected in attitude towards assembly, how you regard your pastor-teacher, your prayer life, fulfilling your obligations toward the various aspects of our local church, and applications towards others.

Warning (v.5)

VERSE 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the

deeds you did at first (μνημόνευε οὖν πόθεν πέπτωκας καὶ μετανόησον καὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἔργα ποιήσον· [*pres.act.imper.2s. mnemoneuo remember + conj ouv therefore + adv pothen from where + perf.act.ind.2s. pipto fall (existing results) + conj and + aor.act.imper.2s. metanoeo repent, change the mind + conj and + art.w/adj.acc.nt.p. protos first + noun acc.nt.p. ergon work*]); **or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place -- unless you repent** [εἰ δὲ μή, ἔρχομαί σοι καὶ κινήσω τὴν λυχνίαν σου ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῆς, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσης. [*conj ei w/conj de w/neg me = otherwise + pres.dep.ind.1s. erchomai come + pro.dat.2s. su + conj and + fut.act.ind.1s. kinew move, remove + art.w/noun acc.f.s. luchnia lampstand + pro.gen.2s. su "your" + prep ek + art.w/noun abl.m.s. topos place + pro.gen.f.3s. autos "its" + conj ean conj w/neg me = except/unless + aor.act.subj.2s. metanoeo repent*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 5

1. The speaker's command further exposes the problem and offers a way to correct the fault.
2. Three aorist imperatives constitute the ground of their spiritual recovery: "Remember...repent...do."
3. They are called upon to reflect upon their earlier history of love characterized by zeal and to compare it with their present attitudes.
4. They had fallen into the trap of going through the motions (like some marriages).
5. After pondering their former days and seeing the disparity they are to "repent" or "change their minds."

6. To complete the recovery prescription, they are to start applying in those areas that have languished or are fulfilled in a haphazard fashion.
7. These actions are all part of a single action designed to keep them from severe divine judgment.
8. The threat is, that if they do not shape up, their local ministry of representing Christ before the world will be terminated.
9. This was no idle threat.
10. God is fully capable of shutting down a local church for any number of infractions.
11. This particular infraction had to do with their overall lackluster approach to the CWL, while retaining overt orthodoxy.
12. It fell to the pastor-teacher to get the ball rolling.
13. The threat of loss of light bearing applies to all churches.
14. We not only honor His name by making the good confession but also by our relationship to one another and the mutual obligations within the royal family (no place for isolation or indifference).
15. This malady had so infected the Ephesian church that it had put itself in the crosshairs of God's wrath.
16. This is quite an amazing indictment considering the commendation of verses 2 and 3!