

# The Seven Churches in Revelation

## Revelation 2: 4–5 Ephesus

- You have abandoned your first love.
- You have fallen from a great height.
- Repent and do the things you did at first.
- If you don't I will remove your lamp stand.

### Observations:

The greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Over and over in Scripture we are told to put God first; seek Him first; make Him the priority of our lives. Anything less is abandoning our first love.

Ephesus had fallen from a great height. It was Paul who spent three years in Ephesus and radically transformed the city and the culture (the silversmiths led a riot, if you remember). Also evangelistic teams from Ephesus went throughout Asia Minor expanding the kingdom.

They were called to repent and do the things they first did. Specifically, they needed to return to their first love. Secondly, they needed to return to doing what they first did – spreading the Gospel.

**Key Problem – They have LOST THEIR FIRST LOVE**

## Revelation 2:8–10 Smyrna

Our Lord commended this church for remaining faithful amidst tribulation and testing. They were encouraged by the Lord to remain faithful and face imprisonment and testing. By remaining faithful they would receive the crown of life.

**Key Triumphs – endured tribulation, testing and suffering – were rich in God's eyes, remained faithful unto death, received the crown of life.**

## Revelation 2:14–15 Pergamum

- You have those who hold to the teaching of Balaam, which enticed Israel to sin.
  - Sexual immorality
  - Eating meat sacrificed to idols
- You also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

The correction given to this church had to do with tolerating “false teaching” that led their people into sin. Specifically, sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols. This was first addressed in *Acts 15* at the Council of Jerusalem, where they were debating the Gentiles and their inclusion in the Gospel. The council concluded that the Gentiles were to abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols and refrain from sexual immorality.

We know little about the teaching of the Nicolaitans but all references found from antiquity confirm that sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols were part of this sect.

**Key Problem – tolerate false teaching and sexual immorality.**

### **Revelation 2:20–23 Thyatira**

This church tolerates “Jezebel” who professes to be a prophetess but in reality leads people astray into sexual immorality and meat sacrificed to idols. There is a very severe judgment coming against her. God has given her time to repent; yet she will not. Therefore she and all those who commit adultery with her will fall into great tribulation as an example to all the churches.

Jezebel was a central person during the ministry of Elijah (*1 Kings 18 ff*). She is a controlling spirit that undermines God’s authority, specifically Ahab, the King. She introduced false gods, the pagan worship of Baal and directly opposed God’s prophet Elijah seeking his death. In essence she controlled Ahab and compromised his leadership allowing Israel to fall into apostasy and sin.

Slumbering churches tolerate the spirit of Jezebel and allow the faith of the church to be compromised and sin to abound. Slumbering churches usually have weak leadership, particularly male leadership. Slumbering churches are often deaf to God’s chosen messengers (Elijah) and seek to oppose or kill them.

**Key Problem – tolerates “Jezebel”**

### **Revelation 3:1–6 The Church at Sardis**

- They had a reputation for being alive, but were in fact dead.
- They were told to WAKE UP.
- They were told to strengthen what remains.
- Their deeds were not complete (i.e. not sanctified).
- Remember what you have heard (Apostles teaching).

- Obey it.
- Repent, if you don't – judgment.
- There are a few who are “not soiled” (always a remnant).
- Those who remain, their names will stay in the book of Life.

### **Observations**

This is a church that has a reputation for life but is dead to the Spirit. They have all the outward trappings of godliness, yet no real substance. They hold services, and do churchy things, but they are not alive to the Spirit and therefore are actually dead.

The issue is obviously obedience. They have heard the message but are not in obedience. Did not Jesus say, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, yet do not do what I say.”

**Key Problem – Dead to the Spirit, lack of obedience**

### ***Revelation 3:7–10*      The Church at Philadelphia**

This church was also commended by the Lord for perseverance in keeping His Word and not denying His name. The Lord specifically promised them protection during the pressure that was coming on the earth. He opened a door, which no man could shut, for his ministry.

**Key Triumphs – they kept His Word, did not deny His name, received the crown, received protection and received an open door for ministry.**

### **Revelation 3:14–22    Laodicea**

- Not hot or cold.
- About to be spit from the Lord's mouth.
- They are rich, wealthy, affluent and without need.
- Reality – they are blind, wretched, pitiful, poor, and naked.
- Buy from me gold (The Word) refined by fire.
- White robes to cover your nakedness (repentance).
- Salve for your eyes to see (born again to see the kingdom – Holy Spirit).

The Lord will discipline those He loves. He is standing at the door knocking. You must hear and let Him back in.

**Key Problem – Carnality and Worldliness**

### **Characteristics of Slumbering Churches**

1. Forsake their first love.
2. Tolerate false teaching.
3. Allow sexual immorality.
4. Are rich, carnal and worldly.
5. Are spiritual blind to their true condition?
6. They have lost their passion for the Gospel (lukewarm).
7. Their deeds are not complete.
8. Have compromised male leadership.
9. Allow pagan worship alongside true worship.
10. No longer evangelize.
11. Lose their lamp stand – light of the world.
12. Lack obedience.

### **Characteristics of Commended Churches**

1. Faithfully endure tribulation, suffering and testing.
2. Are often poor by worldly standard but rich in faith.
3. Receive the Crown of Life.
4. Are faithful until death.
5. Keep His Word.
6. Do not deny His name.
7. Receive God's protection.
8. Have open doors for ministry.

**Key Point – God loves His Church – He loves us enough to rebuke us so we can repent and be restored.**

Ephesus	Apostolic Church
Smyrna	Persecuted Church
Pergamum	Compromised Church – mixed marriage
Thyatira	Medieval
Sardis	Denominational
Philadelphia	Missionary
Laodicea	Apostate