



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #356
The Eternal Ministry of Jesus in Heaven
The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future

Jesus Speaks to the Church in Ephesus,
And All Believers Who Will Listen
Rev. 2.1-7

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1 "I command you to write to the messenger of the church in Ephesus:

"This is what the One who is firmly gripping the seven stars in his right hand, and is walking among the seven golden lampstands is saying.

2 "I know your deeds, your hard work and your endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be liars. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary to the point of permanent exhaustion.

4 "Yet I am holding this against you: You have abandoned the love you had for me at first.

5 "I command you to seriously think about how far you have permanently fallen! I command you to change your mind and heart, 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.

6 "But you have this in your favor: You continue to hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I am also hating.

7 "Whoever has ears, I command them to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the person who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of eternal life, which is in the paradise of God."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	On the Greek Island of Patmos, Just Off the Coast of Turkey
Timeline	About 60 Years After Jesus Ascended
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IX: The Resurrection and Eternal Ministry of Jesus

	Jesus' Eternal Ministry in Heaven
	The Continuing Words and Works of the Risen Jesus Throughout Eternity Future
Title:	Jesus Speaks to the Church in Ephesus, and All Believers Who Will Listen

Today's text begins a series of seven messages from Jesus to the seven representative churches of Asia Minor, or modern Turkey. Each message was composed of four common elements:

- (1) Greeting and description of some aspect of Jesus' nature
- (2) Jesus' diagnosis of the spiritual condition of that Church
- (3) Command(s) to address the spiritual condition of the believers in the Church
- (4) A closing promise to those who "overcome" their present condition

In addition, Jesus included one common command at the conclusion of each message. This tied the seven messages together as a set. Here it is: ***"Whoever has ears, I command them to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches."***

Did you notice that the first part of this saying repeats a command that Jesus delivered several times in his earthly ministry? ***"Whoever has ears to hear, I command them to keep on hearing."*** This saying connects the eternal ministry of Jesus in heaven with his ministry on earth. Same message; same Jesus.

However, Jesus added a key phrase here: ***"What the Spirit is saying to the Churches."*** This is an excellent reminder that Jesus in heaven ministers on earth through the agency of his Spirit indwelling his people. Jesus speaks the words in heaven, and the Spirit faithfully repeats every word of it within the minds and hearts of his people. The Spirit also gives understanding of what Jesus has said. Jesus gave the command to ***"hear,"*** because we must depend upon and seek the ministry of the Spirit in communicating Jesus' heavenly words to us. Listening to the Spirit is a choice; it is not automatic.

Jesus also spoke of the ***"Churches."*** Though each message was tailored to the condition and needs of each individual church, there is a cumulative message that applies to each believer and every Church in the world as well. That is, these seven Churches collectively represent the needs and general conditions of every Church and believer. After all, there were seven messages to seven Churches.

Seven is the number which means "completeness" in the Bible, and it is particularly important as a vital "sign" number in John's writings, who chose to write about seven "signs" of Jesus' earthly ministry in his gospel. John chose the seven signs to collectively represent all the miracles that Jesus performed. Likewise, these seven messages to the seven churches represent all churches and all believers.

These seven messages then, are crucial for every believer and Church in this age, in which we know and follow the heavenly Jesus through the power of his indwelling Spirit and Word. The key issues of life, faith, and ministry in this age are dealt with by Jesus in these precious seven texts. We ignore his command to listen carefully to what the Spirit is saying to us in these words at the cost of eternal loss, and earthly ineffectiveness in discipleship. This is another reason why we include Jesus's words and works after his ascension in the full story of his life and ministry in the DAILY JESUS NEWS, and the SAGA OF JESUS CHRIST.

Now, for today's message. We will briefly identify each of the four standard sections in Jesus's message to the Church in Ephesus.

(1) Jesus's general description of himself in verse 1 is as the One who is in full control of the Churches, walking in fellowship with them in the central role. Jesus is the Head of his body, the Church. He called in "MY Church" in his earthly ministry. So he is.

(2) Jesus' spiritual diagnosis always begins with "I know," as it did here. He knew and acknowledged all the good things about these believers, who were striving to be faithful. Jesus always addresses the positive aspects of our relationship with praise, before he speaks the truth in love about our shortcomings. In the case of the Ephesian believers, Jesus told them that they had strayed away from HIM as their greatest, most passionate love.

These words were spoken to the Church in Ephesus, but they apply equally to all of us, for the Greatest Commandment, according to Jesus is:

"The most important one (commandment) is this: 'HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. 30 LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' (Duet. 6.4-5)

The Lord was not afraid to apply this primary Old Covenant command to himself, as the recipient of his disciple's supreme love and devotion: ***"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters in comparison to his love for me--yes, even their own life--such a person just cannot be my disciple."*** LK 14.26

Jesus does not desire his followers to literally "hate" their family and friends. It is a matter of the degree of love we have for him as our God, and the love we offer created things or people. In comparison to the degree of passionate love we have for him, our love for everyone and everything else should be relegated to something obviously and absolutely less. God alone is worthy and deserving of our unlimited, unqualified devotion and love. The Ephesians had slipped in their love for Jesus.

(3) Jesus therefore commanded them to seriously think about the status of their love for him, agree with him concerning it, and permanently change their minds and hearts back (repent) to supreme, unrivaled love for him. If not, they would lose their witness and ministry in the city of Ephesus due to the coldness of their hearts. The primary thing that nonbelievers of Jesus need to see in our lives is the kind of unrivaled love for God that is only possible by first receiving his unconditional love for us. Without God as our first love, we lose the authenticity of our witness.

(4) Jesus promised that those who heeded his command to repent would have special privileges in heaven--the ability to eat the fruit of the tree of eternal life. Obedience and devotion in this life had eternal consequences. The "fruit" of our devotion on this earth will be enjoyed eternally in heaven. Persistence in loving obedience has massive, eternal consequences totally incompatible with the degree of our faithfulness. This is the goodness and grace of God. He takes our tiny, limited, short times of obedience and multiplies them into eternal rewards. How encouraging!

APPLICATION: When we fail to act and speak out of love for Jesus, nothing we do has value before him. Re-read Paul's words in I Cor. 13.1-3 about the consequences of failing to love God. We ARE nothing, and everything we do amounts to nothing when it is not an expression of our supreme love for him. Jesus' words to the Church in Ephesus are a sobering reminder to us all; a word from Jesus straight to us all.

Do you have spiritual ears to hear Jesus questioning you about the quality of your love for him? Are other people or things more important to you than him?

What do you need to do today in order to overcome the degraded state of your love for Jesus? When and how?