

#### 4) The Problem Of Evanescence In Ephesus

- A) Despite the great success of a hard working and doctrinally pure ministry, the Ephesian church had allowed the essential element of loving Jesus to slip away. They had allowed what was good (doing things) to become a higher priority than what was right (loving Jesus).
  
- B) Jesus provides the solution to their dilemma. The Ephesians, and all people/churches who find themselves "giving out of nothing," must go "back to the beginning" (Revelation 2:5).
  
- C) Jesus warns that neglecting this essential and central issue of remaining connected to the source (loving Jesus) will result in losing all that has been worked for in the church (Revelation 2:5). The light will simply go out!

#### 5) Don't Get Whiplash, Just Fall In Love Again...

- A) As if to communicate that good works are not the problem (they are, after all, for the name/sake of Christ -- Revelation 2:3), Jesus compliments the Ephesians on their hatred of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6).
  
- B) It's not the good works which Jesus Christ objects to in our lives! Jesus Christ wants the highest priority in His church to be loving Him! This is the highest priority in the church, more important than anything else we do!
  
- C) For those who overcome and succeed, Jesus promises the abundance of eternal life -- the opportunity to love Him forever. A perfect relationship in the perfect place of the Paradise of God (Revelation 2:7).

# Evanescence

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**BUT I HAVE THIS AGAINST  
YOU, THAT YOU HAVE LEFT  
YOUR FIRST LOVE.  
~REVELATION 2:4 (NASB)**

#### 1) The Church & City Of Ephesus

- A) The church in Ephesus had a remarkable pedigree of outstanding leadership:
  - i. The Ephesian church was founded by Priscilla and Aquila, friends of the Apostle Paul (18:18-19).
  - ii. Priscilla & Aquila were assisted in Ephesus by an eloquent young preacher named Apollos (Acts 18:24-26).
  - iii. Paul himself spent three years (Acts 20:31) of his third missionary journey teaching (Acts 19:1-7) and baptizing (Acts 19:5).
  - iv. Paul taught the elders at the Ephesian church principles of leadership, with particular emphasis on protecting the believers from false teachers (Acts 20:17-38).
  - v. Timothy, a young preacher and protégé of Paul's, was the appointed pastor of the Ephesian church, placed there especially to prevent false teaching (1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:3).
  - vi. Onesiphorus (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:16, 18) and Tychicus (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:12) also ministered in Ephesus.
  - vii. According to tradition, the Apostle John (the author of Revelation) also served as "the elder" in Ephesus (2<sup>nd</sup> John 1; 3<sup>rd</sup> John 1).

- B) Because of the outstanding pedigree of leadership, the expectation level for excellence in the Ephesian church was very high. Ephesus was a “paradigm” church for all the other churches in Asia Minor.
- C) The city of Ephesus was the most significant city in Asia Minor when it came to commerce, culture and cult worship:
- i. Ephesus was home to large port which provided a great deal of commerce through shipping and trade. The Arcadian Way, which led from the port to the center of Ephesus was a magnificent, wide, column-lined road.
  - ii. Ephesus was home to one of the “seven wonders of the ancient world,” the Temple of Artemis (Diana in Latin). The temple had an (allegedly) impregnable inner shrine which doubled as one of the largest and most important banks in the Mediterranean world.
  - iii. The temple employed thousands of priests, artisans and temple prostitutes. It was the center of both the Ephesian and Mediterranean religious culture.
  - iv. Legend had it that a meteor from the heavens had fallen to the earth in the form of a many-breasted Artemis, which served as an enormous idol for goddess worship.
  - v. Ephesus was also a center for the ‘Imperial cult,’ or the worship of the Roman Caesar.
  - vi. Demetrius led a riot of local silversmiths and cult-dependent businesses against Christians for negatively effecting their commercial interests with the new religion of “The Way” (Acts 19:23-41).
- D) Because of all of the pagan influences in Ephesus, it was a hostile environment for Christianity to succeed. However, since Ephesus was the most important city in Asia Minor, it was essential that Christianity succeed in Ephesus. What happened in Ephesus would be known everywhere!

## 2) A Letter From Jesus Christ Himself For Everyone

- A) The imagery of Revelation 2:1 (and of the entire book of Revelation) would have been well understood in the first century setting in which it was written.
- B) Thankfully, we have chapter one to explain the imagery of Revelation 2:1. From chapter one we know:
- i. “The One” is Jesus Christ. This letter is from Jesus.
  - ii. “The stars” represent the angel (or leadership) of each of the seven churches.
  - iii. “The lampstands” represent the actual seven churches of Revelation. Jesus is moving amongst the seven churches!
- C) It’s valuable to skip forward and note that the letter to Ephesus was not just for them, but for all the “churches” (note the plural). This is a letter for them, and for us (Revelation 2:7).

## 3) Compliments For Doing A Good Job!

- A) Jesus Christ, as one might expect considering the leadership pedigree and hostile environment of Ephesus, compliments the Ephesian church in two key areas of success:
- i. Jesus compliments the Ephesians on their hard work and perseverance (Revelation 2:2).
  - ii. Christ also compliments the Ephesians on their commitment to the truth, shown by their ability to put “false apostles” to the test (Revelation 2:3).