

The Book of Revelation

When You Lose Your First Love

Chapter 2:1-7

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Few things are more hurtful and painful than when a spouse says to their mate, “I don’t love you anymore.” Sometimes there is shock. Often there are tears. To hear the one you have covenanted with for life say, “I have lost my passion for you; I no longer desire you; my feelings for you have grown cold,” rips at the heart and wounds the soul. We may sing a song that says, “You’ve lost that lovin’ feeling,” but we all know this is nothing to sing about.

Often, love for another is lost not in a moment but over time. It takes place slowly, not quickly. We may not even realize it is happening.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Churches are a lot like people. They come in all shapes and sizes, and no two are ever alike, even twins! Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own temperament and peculiarities. Some are vibrant and evangelistic. Others are rather lifeless and quiet. Some are a beehive of activity, others are not busy at all.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Churches do develop reputations. “There is a conservative church ... liberal church ... strong Bible-teaching church ... socially minded church ... traditional church ... contemporary church ... pastor led church ... deacon run church ... and the list goes on.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

However, of all the things that could be said about a church, I believe nothing could be more precious and meaningful than it be said, “that is a church that loves Jesus fervently.” Well, of all the many good things one might say about the church at Ephesus, that is the one thing you could not say.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Why does a church stop loving Jesus and what, if anything, can be done about it? To those questions our Lord provides an answer.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

The 7 churches are literal historical congregations. - The 7 churches were on a major postal/travel route moving counter clockwise. - The number 7 reflects completeness. These 7 churches are typical or representative of local churches throughout history. Hence all the messages are for all the churches throughout history.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

There is a basic and common literary pattern of 5 parts:

- 1) The addressee and a **characterization** of Christ from the vision of chapter 1
- 2) Christ's knowledge of the church's condition and a word of **commendation**;
- 3) A word of reproof or **correction**;
- 4) A word of exhortation or **council**;
- 5) A word of promise which presents a hopeful **challenge**.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1-2 (CSB)

“Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands: 2 I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:3-4 (CSB)

3 I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5-6 (CSB)

5 Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:7 (CSB)

7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “**Write** to the **angel** of the church in **Ephesus**:

I. Christ is characterized by His protection.

Angel (messenger) – 1) literal angel (cf. 1 Cor. 11:10); 2) pastor of the church; 3) messenger to the church

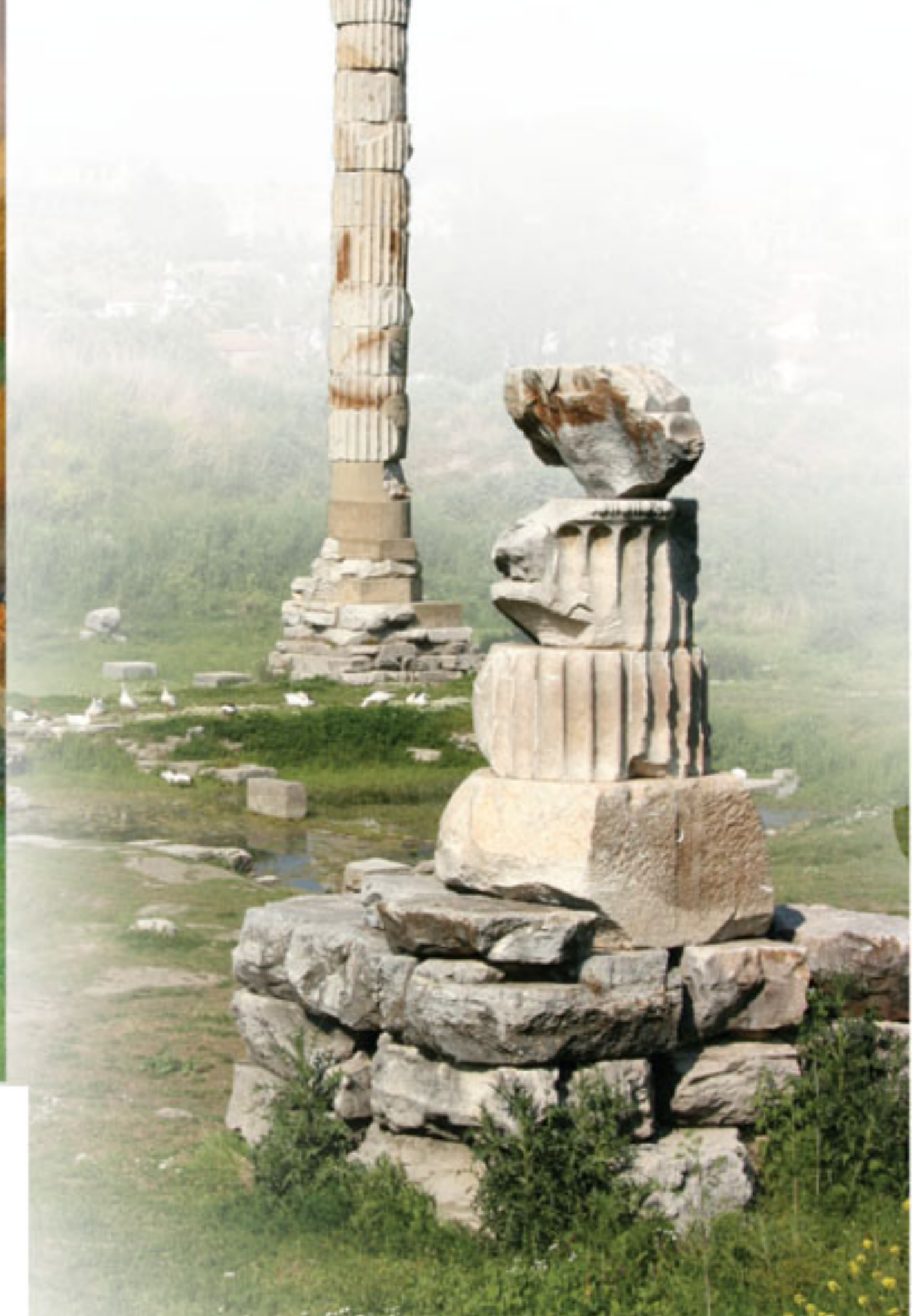
- **Write** (aorist imp.) – there is a sense of urgency
- **Ephesus**: 1) a crossroads of civilization. Politically – capital of Asia and known as the “Supreme Metropolis of Asia.” Commercially – the great highways converged there, and a major seaport was still in place. Some have referred to Ephesus as “the Vanity Fair of the Ancient World.”

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in **Ephesus**:

Ephesus - Ephesus was the Roman provincial capital of Asia Minor with a population of over 250,000. This cosmopolitan seaport city was a center of business, religion, and civic life, as well as the guardian of the temple of Artemis, the mother goddess. The massive temple complex, itself one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, featured thousands of priests and priestesses as well as a booming business related to goddess worship (see Acts 19:23–40).



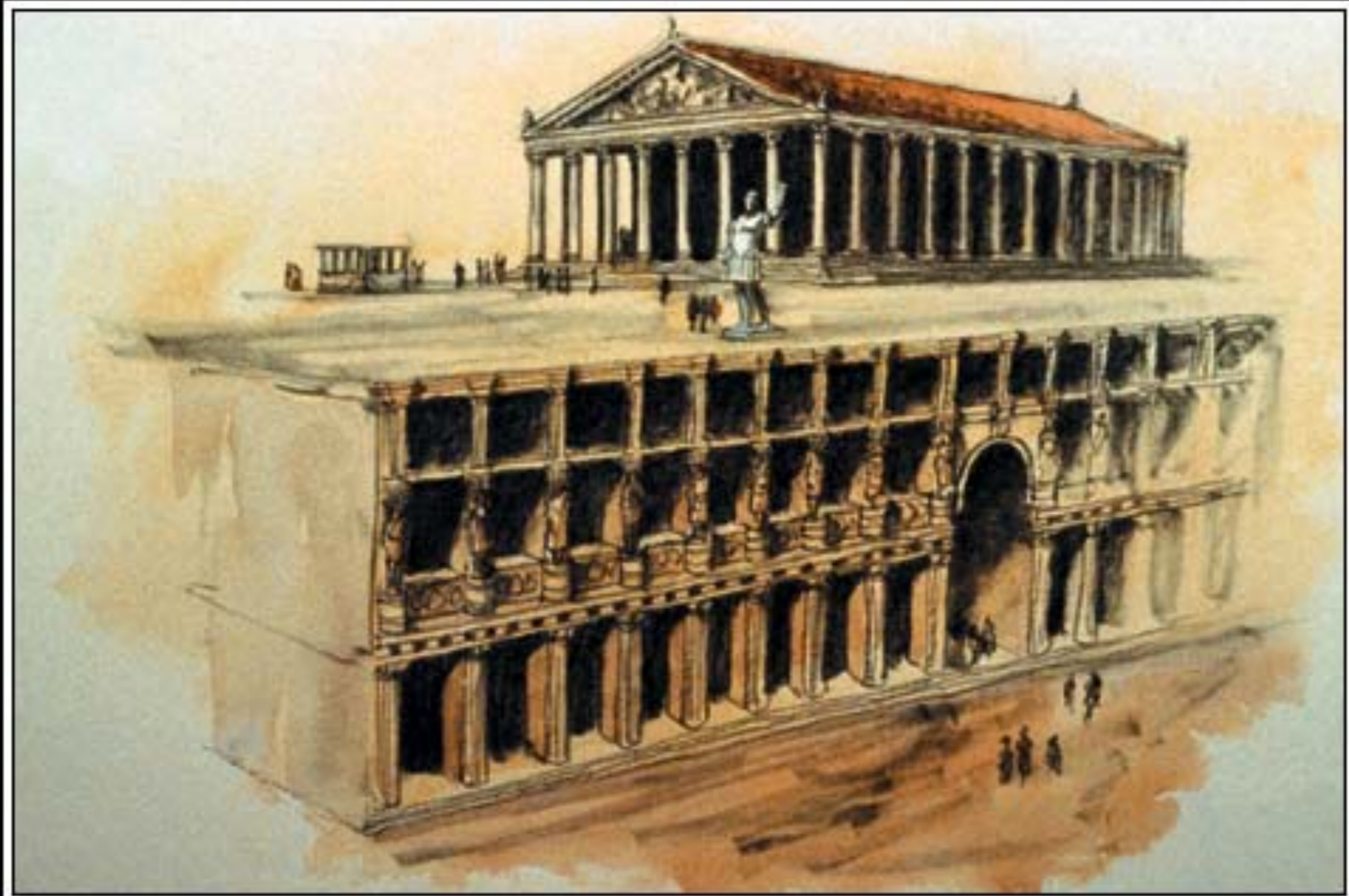
**Above - The Temple of Artemis
Right - All that remains of it today.**

When You Lose Your First Love

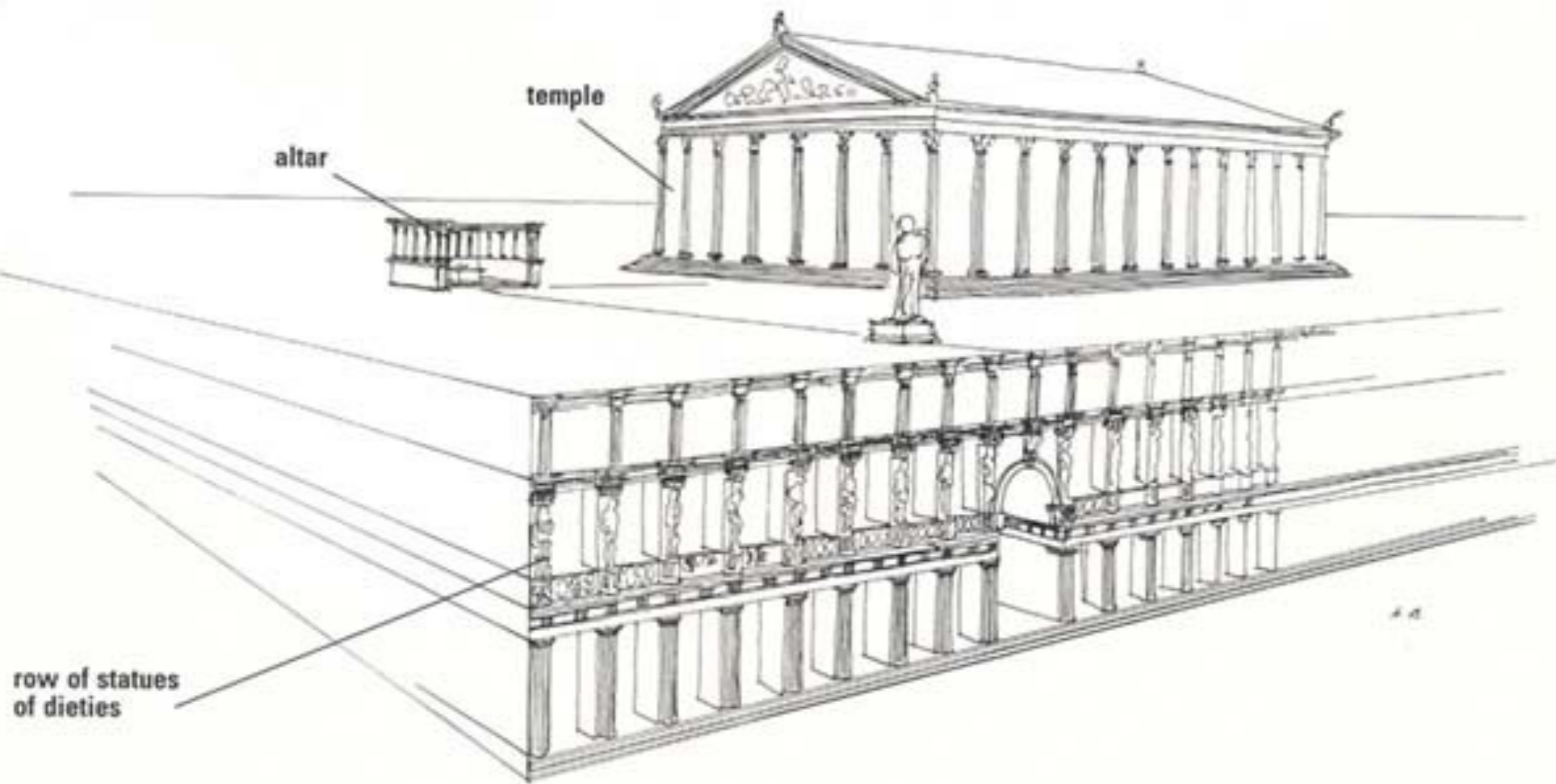
Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in **Ephesus**:

Ephesus Emperor worship was also a dominant influence in Ephesus, which was the leading center of the imperial cult in Asia Minor. A temple to Emperor Domitian (likely the emperor when Revelation was written) was constructed in AD 89/90, featuring a giant statue of an emperor (either Domitian or Titus) that stood over twenty-five feet tall.



Ephesian Temple of the Emperor Domitian - Artist's Reconstruction



The worship of at least fourteen other deities has been documented in Ephesus. This drawing of the temple of Domitian shows a row of statues of deities.



While few temple structures in Ephesus remain today, this photo shows the terrace and supporting arches that were built as a foundation for the temple commissioned by Domitian for emperor worship.



This is all that remains today of the 25 foot tall Emperor Domitian Statue. This is located at the Ephesus Museum in Selcuk, Turkey

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in **Ephesus**:

Ephesus - The Christians of Ephesus faced enormous social and financial pressure to participate in the worship of the emperor. The city was also a center for occult and magical practices, and Acts 19:19 indicates that many new believers renounced their previous life in sorcery by burning their magic scrolls (worth about 50,000 days' wages).

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in **Ephesus**:

Ephesus - Ephesus was certainly a center of paganism in the first-century world. This explains why Jesus commends the believers in Ephesus for standing strong for the truth of the faith and resisting the false teachers. In addition, Ephesus had a large Jewish population, which may have led to racial and religious tensions even within the church. This could have played a role in Jesus’s strong exhortation to return to love as a priority.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the **church in Ephesus**:

Paul, Aquila and Priscilla evangelized and founded the **church at Ephesus** (Acts 18:18-19; 19:1-10). Paul believed the city to be so significant as a gospel outpost that he labored there for at least 2 years (Acts 19:10). His ministry was not uneventful and included a riot related to the temple of Diana. Later Paul would meet with their elders at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38) and he wrote one of his prison letters to them in the early 60's. Paul, Timothy and now John had ministered to this church. What a heritage! What a danger!!! Here is a 2nd generation that was living off the prestige and momentum of the past.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who **holds** the **seven stars in his right hand** and who walks among the seven golden lampstands:

Know that Christ cares.

Holds (pre. tense) – possession, protection and power.
Means to grasp or hold fast.

The seven stars in His right hand – the messengers are in the hand of authority. He is responsible for them and they are accountable to Him.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:1 (CSB) “Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who **walks** among the seven golden lampstands:

Walks (pre. tense) – walks about. The Lord Jesus patrols the ground of His churches. His presence is a constant promise of protection. He is both sustainer and watchman. He is always with us watching our actions, hearing our words, perceiving our motives, reading our every thought. What assurance! What accountability! III. What did he hear, see, last Sunday? At the supper table? In the Sunday School classroom, in the hallway? At the cafeteria, the school? Never forget Church, He is there!

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:2 (CSB) I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.

The church is commended for its purity.

This church was awesome, outstanding in a number of areas. The Lord fairly and accurately takes note of the good things that they are doing. We would do well to follow them at this point.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:2 (CSB) I know your **works**, your **labor**, and your **endurance**, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.

Jesus is pleased with our **works**. Activity and orthodoxy were hallmarks of this church.

Labor – hard toil, wearisome and strenuous labor to the point of exhaustion.

Endurance (cf. 1 Thess. 1:3), perseverance. Bear – to endure.

*They were active, energetic, busy with the business of the church. In all of this Jesus is well pleased.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:2 (CSB) I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate **evil people**. You have **tested** those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars.

Evil people - These are false brothers claiming to be apostles. Charlatans and imposters existed in the first century just as they do in the 21st century. This church **tested** them. How we cannot be sure, but I suspect it started along this line: What do you believe about the person and work of Jesus? This is the key to all of one's theology!

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:3 (CSB) 3 I know that you have **persevered** and endured hardships **for the sake of my name**, and **have not grown weary**.

Persevered – same as endurance in verse 2. They continue to endure and persevere.

For the sake of my name - They labored for the right reason.

Have not grown weary – no throwing in the towel, dropping out of the race, refusing to answer the bell. Amidst persecution and opposition they stayed with it. What an example for us to follow!

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:4 (CSB) But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.

The church is criticized for its passion. By all outward appearances Ephesus looked like a healthy and holy church. Good deeds, faithful dedication and sound doctrine were its distinguishing marks. Yet, all was not well. Indeed there was a crucial problem that, if left uncorrected, could be fatal to this fellowship.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:4 (CSB) **But I have this against you:** You have abandoned the love you had at first.

But I have this against you We must not disappoint the Lord.. What sobering words to hear from our Lord, “But I have this against you.” There is an area of your life where I stand on the opposite side, an area that pains me, hurts me, disappoints me. It is possible to disappoint our Lord.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:4 (CSB) But I have this against you: **You have abandoned the love you had at first.**

You have abandoned the love you had at first. We must not depart from the Lord.

- Lit. the love of you the first you left. “Left” means to forsake, let go. They did not lose, they left their first love. •

First love: 1) original love for one another or 2) initial love and devotion to Christ. This is the better, yet tragic understanding.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:4 (CSB) But I have this against you: **You have abandoned the love you had at first.**

The text does not say they left their love; it says they left their “first love.” Their love had grown cold. The fervent and passionate love they had for Jesus when they first received Him had dissipated and waned. “Every day with Jesus was not sweeter than the day before.” What they once did out of love they now did as a matter of routine. They were doing the right things but not for the right reason. Why we do what we do matters to Jesus!

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5 (CSB) Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

The church is corrected with a plan. All was not well, but all was not lost. It never is with Jesus and His church. Our great physician has diagnosed the illness. Now he offers a remedy.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

When you lose your first love...

1. Remember how far you have fallen (2:5a)

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5 (CSB) **Remember** then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Remember. Keep on remembering. Never forget what you have lost! Go back and note when and where the flame of love grew faint. Take an inventory and evaluate where you are now compared to then. Go back to the time when your love for Jesus was all that mattered. What was it like? What is missing now?

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

When you lose your first love...

- 1. Remember how far you have fallen (2:5a)**
- 2. Repent (2:5b)**

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5 (CSB) Remember then how far you have fallen; **repent**, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Repent. To change your mind resulting in a change of attitude and action. Think differently about your sin; sins of indifference, religious formalism, legalistic routine. - Labor is no substitute for love. - Purity is no substitute for passion. - Deeds are no substitute for devotion. Do not pat yourself on the back for doing good things for the wrong reason. God looks on the heart. Where is your heart in all of this?!

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

When you lose your first love...

- 1. Remember how far you have fallen (2:5a)**
- 2. Repent (2:5b)**
- 3. Return and do the works you did at first (2:5c)**

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5 (CSB) Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and **do the works you did at first**. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Return and **do the works you did at first**. The place where you first fell in love is the place where you first understood He loved you, not because you deserved it or could even earn it, but because He just did.

The place where you first fell in love was probably somewhere near the cross.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:5 (CSB) Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Returning and doing the first works will keep a church from losing its witness and eventually its existence. Today Ephesus is a rubble and ruin. Tragically it appears the Ephesians never got their first love back.



When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:6 (CSB) 6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the **Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

Who are the **Nicolaitans**? In the entire New Testament, only two passages refer to the Nicolaitans – Revelation 2:6 and 2:15.

Likewise, the church fathers – Irenaeus, Clement, and Tertullian mention the Nicolaitans only briefly. The New Testament shows that the Nicolaitans were a sect whose teachings were repudiated in Ephesus (2:6), yet they had several adherents in Pergamum (2:15).

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:6 (CSB) 6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the **Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

Irenaeus (Against Heresies 1. 26. 3) identified the Nicolaitans as the heretical followers of Nicolaus, the proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:5).

“The Nicolaitans are the followers of that Nicolaus who was one of the seven first ordained to the diaconate by the apostles. They lead lives of unrestrained indulgence. The character of these men is very plainly pointed out in the Apocalypse of John when they are represented as teaching that it is a matter of indifference to practice adultery, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:6 (CSB) 6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the **Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

The theology of the Nicolaitans can be seen in the description of the evil works of the church at Pergamum (Rev. 2:15). What did the Nicolaitans teach? Immorality and idolatry appear to be the heresies which they tried to teach in the churches at Ephesus and Pergamum. Ephesus refused but Pergamum tolerated a group who believed the Nicolaitans. These pagan practices, contrary to the thought and conduct required in the Christian churches, paralleled the teaching of Balaam in the Old Testament. Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the Israelites causing them to “eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality” (2:14, RSV).

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:6 (CSB) 6 Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the **Nicolaitans**, which I also hate.

The Nicolaitans perhaps had misunderstood Paul's doctrine of freedom from the law. They encouraged eating meat sacrificed to idols and participating in immoral sexual practices. The Nicolaitans also could have been responsible for the teaching that "one could worship Caesar in the flesh and Christ in the Spirit." In order to avoid embarrassment at civic and religious activities, this group may have chosen to assimilate pagan practices into the life of the church. This attempt to accommodate non-Christian practices is condemned by Christ. It was also rejected by the Ephesians. For this they are commended by Christ.

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:6 Yet you do have this: You **hate** the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also **hate**.

Psalms 139:21 Lord, don't I **hate** those who hate you, and detest those who rebel against you?

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:7 (CSB) 7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear **listen to what the Spirit says to the churches**. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

We are commanded to **listen to what the Spirit says to the churches** - this is clearly a message also for us to hear.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:7 (CSB) 7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who **conquers**, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Conquers see 1 John 5:4-5 for who is an overcomer. The true disciple who by faith continually gains the victory.

1 John 5:4-5 (CSB) 4 because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. 5 Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:7 (CSB) 7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

As each characterization of Christ looks to the vision of Chapter 1, so each challenge to the Church looks to the end time blessings of chapters 19-22.

Tree of life – Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24; Rev. 22:2 •

Paradise of God – Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4. A synonym for Heaven. A Persian word meaning a beautiful park or garden. Paradise lost is paradise regained for the overcomer whose faith and love are in Jesus. Paradise is where Jesus is.

When You Lose Your First Love

Revelation 2:1-7

Revelation 2:7 (CSB) 7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the **tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.

tree of life. Access to this tree in Eden, and the eternal life it promised to the pure, was banned after humanity’s fall (Gen. 3:22–24). It reappears in the new Jerusalem, its roots watered by living water from God’s throne, its fruit a constant source of nourishment, and its leaves bringing healing to the city’s inhabitants, whose names appear in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev. 22:1–2).

Crossway Bibles, The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2466.

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from **the tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.

Genesis 2:9 The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including **the tree of life** in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:22 The Lord God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from **the tree of life**, eat, and live forever.”

Genesis 3:24 He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to **the tree of life**.

Old Testament Connections

Revelation 2:7 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, **which is in the paradise of God.**

Genesis 2:8 **The Lord God planted a garden** in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed.

Ezekiel 28:13 You were in Eden, **the garden of God.** Every kind of precious stone covered you: carnelian, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold; they were prepared on the day you were created.

The Book of Revelation

When You Lose Your First Love

Chapter 2:1-7