

KEEPING FIRST THINGS FIRST

[Luzira Full Gospel Church , Bweyogerere FGC, Zana FGC, Nakawa Pentecostal Church– Nov 2004 – EKB -
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Reading: *Rev 2:1-7* **Church of Ephesus**

Jesus tells John to write to:

v1 The angel = the messenger of the Church at Ephesus (*Lk 7:24* – maybe human or heavenly). Jesus reveals that He is holding the seven angels in His right hand and that He is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. The golden candlesticks are the seven churches of Asia. They are described as candlesticks because the church is the place of the anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus describes the good works and labour of the Church at Ephesus:

v2,3 The Church at Ephesus was busy serving the Lord with diligence and patience and was an example to others. Their emphasis on good deeds and works had become their first priority. They laboured tirelessly serving the Lord.

Jesus reveals to the Church that there is something more important to Him than our labour and works:

v4 **They had not kept THE FIRST THINGS FIRST. They had left their first love. They were not spending time in God's presence,** in worship, in prayer, in the Word and in thanksgiving. **Our personal relationship to the Lord is more important to Him than the works we do for Him.** Our works for God must come by revelation and **revelation comes from a close relationship with the Lord.** As we spend time in His presence in prayer, praise, worship, fellowship and the Word, the Lord reveals to us what He wants us to do. Otherwise we end up in doing good works which are initiated from our own hearts. Probably this is what had happened in the Ephesian Church. They had become so busy doing good works that they did not have time to wait on the Lord. They were not hearing His voice and were not being led by the Holy Spirit. *Rom 8:14.*

Jesus commands the church to repent and to do the first works:

v5 Jesus says, **“Remember from where you have fallen.” “Repent”.** “And go back to your first love.” **“Spend time in my presence. Seek Me. I am your life.”** At the beginning the Church at Ephesus had an emphasis on the worship of God, *Ac 19:6,20, Eph 1:13,14,17-19, 2:22, 3:16-19, Ac 20:17,28.* Jesus strongly warns the Church that if they do not repent He will remove their candlestick and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. **The anointing on the Church comes from the time spent in the presence of the Lord,** for Jesus said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, *Mat21:13.* Without the anointing of the Spirit, the church is an empty shell unable to do the will of God.

Jesus commends the church for their rejection of the Nicolaitans:

v6 It is thought by many commentators that the Nicolaitans were a group in the church who claimed to be Christians but were immoral. They said that you could still be a Christian and live in immorality. Also they promoted the worship of idols. The name Nicolaitans means ruling over or consuming the people, and is the Greek form of the Hebrew for Balaam which means the destroyer of the people. (Commentary on the whole Bible – Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, NIV Study Bible.) *2Pet 2:15:19, Jude 4-13,* describe the sins of the Nicolaitans, or followers of the way of Balaam. See *Rev 2:14,15.*

Jesus promises to those who overcome, and walk in obedience to what He has said, that they will eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God:

v7 It is very important to listen and to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. Those who repent and restore their first love, of spending time in God's Presence, hearing His voice and doing His will, will eat of the **Tree of Life,** which is in the midst of God's dwelling place. *Gen 2:9, Rev 22:2.* **Eating of the Tree of Life is another way of saying that we are receiving the life of Christ.** This is the message of Jesus in *Jn 15* of abiding in the Vine. As we abide in Christ, and His life flows into us, we bear fruit, more fruit and much fruit.

So make up your mind, in obedience to Christ, to keep your personal relationship with Him as your Number 1 priority. Out of this will come a life that will glorify God through the works which He gives you to do.

AMEN!