

02. Seven Letters to the Churches chapter 2 Ephesus

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2nd Audio message begins here.

Introduction to the Book of Revelation which should have been at the beginning of this study !!!

There are many sevens in the whole Book of Revelation and they also are interesting.

- Seven seals 6 seals, break and then 7th
- Seven Trumpets 6 - then 7th
- Seven Bowls 6 - then 7th sevens all through
- Seven lampstands
- Seven spirits
- Seven stars
- Seven lamps
- Seven 'title pairs'
- Seven promises to the overcomer
- Seven horns
- Seven eyes
- Seven angels
- Seven thunders
- Seven thousand
- Seven heads
- Seven crowns
- Seven plagues
- Seven mountains
- Seven kings

- Seven Beatitudes - Blessed are they
 - Blessed is he that reads, hears and keeps those things
 - Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord
 - Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments
 - Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb
 - Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection
 - Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.
 - Blessed are they that wash their robes

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- Seven features in ch 1
- Seven letter divisions
- Seven personages ch 12,13
 - Woman
 - Man child
 - Red dragon
 - 7 headed Beast
 - False prophet
 - Michael
 - Lamb
- Seven years of judgements
- Seven 'I Am's' of Christ
- Seven Doxologies in Heaven
- Seven New Things at the end

Only God could design a Book that contained such precision and organisation.

A reminder of Jesus' words in **ch 1:19** which encapsulates the whole book.

The beginning of the whole Book starts with

The vision of the Glorified Christ (write the things which **you have seen**)

Then the letters to the churches (which are present and prophetic - **which are**)

Then what happens afterwards (the things which will take place **after this**)

Levels of Application

1. Local
2. Admonitory to all churches
3. Homiletic (personal) He who has an ear.....they all apply to us personally
4. Prophetic. Because they are in the order they are they outline the entire history of the church.

Revelation Chapter 2

The Letter to Ephesus

*1 'To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: the title of Christ **Rev 2:1***

Jesus here picks out the title from **ch 1:20** when referring to Himself. Basically He is saying 'to Ephesus from Jesus' but calls Himself by this particular title. He is saying 'to My Beloved' or 'Desired one' a definite term of endearment. He shows Himself as walking among the churches. Then goes on to the Commendation.

2 "I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Jesus really piles on the good stuff here. Really encourages them.

3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary.

We see here **7 positive things** Jesus commends them for.

Going to **Acts ch 20:21-38** Paul's farewell address to the **Ephesian elders** whom he called to join him at Miletus.

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He reminds them of his service amongst them and his tears and how he taught them from **house to house**. Shows they had had good sound teaching from Paul himself who left out nothing but declared **v27** the whole counsel of God.

- House to house is interesting. All believers in the new testament met in each others houses. This was normal.
- It was the original form of fellowship. All incidents in the Book of Acts were in homes.
- Formal churches weren't established until the 3rd century.
- Home churches were ostracized by
 - Medieval Church and by
 - Reformation churches
 - And by many churches today.
- It's the most viable form for underground churches today.

Acts 20:26,27 very important verse. *'Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole Counsel of God.'* **Ezekiel 33:8-9**

The whole counsel of God is our protection against heresy. So many times people listen to preachers who declare a teaching and they never check it out. Does the Bible really say this. How many verses refer to this thing. We should be like the Bereans in **Acts 17:11** who when they heard the teaching went straight to the scriptures and searched in them daily to find out if these things were so.

Notice in **Acts 20:27-29** Paul had a word from God that after his departure, wolves would enter the church and rise up among the flock, even from among themselves they would start speaking a different gospel drawing away many disciples.

It didn't take long for things to go wrong.

So back to Revelation - they had had the good news and had kept the faith. There was much to commend them. In fact they had followed Paul's advice and had tested those who said they were Apostles but were not.....they were diligent about doctrine because of Paul's influence. But Jesus was not going to overlook what concerned Him about this church.

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4 Nevertheless *I have this against you, that **you have left your first love.***

That is the primary thrust of this letter. They have left their first love of Christ and Love of the Word. They were too busy on the business of the King that they hadn't time for the King. So He gives them this exhortation.,

Second generation of believers have become lax and cold. Lost the fire, or never really had it. A similar problem is seen in the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews. Therein lies the danger of falling away into eventual apostasy.

Love of Espousal -

- Joy of Salvation **Psalm 51:12; Jer 2:2; 2 Cor 11:2; 1 John 4:19**
- First named fruit of the Spirit is love **Gal 5:22**
- God uses the marriage to communicate His most intimate truths
- 20 references to this grace are found in Paul's epistle o the Ephesians. Eph 5

Luke 10:38-42 It's interesting that Jesus is ok with that. Martha was so busy looking after everyone but Jesus said Mary had chosen the best thing, she sat at Jesus' feet to learn. He's looking for devotion. This outranks everything else.

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place— unless you repent.**

The Greek word implies do it now and don't delay.

But then Jesus adds another commendation in v6

6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Not a lot can be found out about them but the Nicolaitans appear to be a 1st century sect claiming apostolic authority for their opinions.

Nicao - to conquer, overcome or rule the people

Laos - The laity

In contrast, the way the Lord taught them was the opposite. He washed their feet to show He was not lording it over them but to be a helper and enabler.

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They are obviously not behaving as they should because Jesus says He hates their **deeds**. **The** deeds become doctrines in the Letter to Pergamos.

Paul's epistle to the Ephesians was written from Rome 4 years after his farewell. It's very similar to Colossians both written about the same time.

But Ephesians is simply a letter springing from Paul's love to the church there, and indicates his earnest desire that they should be fully instructed in the profound doctrines of the gospel. So it would be good to read it in the light of this letter to the church of Ephesus in Revelation. . It's personal.

A Look at David and Solomon

David pervades scripture Solomon is mentioned mainly with adverse comments **Matt 6:28-29**. **1 Kings 11** describes Solomon's descent into idolatry

Deut 17:16-17 a king is commanded not to multiply horses or wives or gold or silver.

- **1 Kings ch 1** - misplaced love **Matt 10:37** Love is good only when its objects are good.
- Evil companions (**v.2, see 1Corinthians 15:33**). Close ties should not be made with those who follow evil.
- Seeking status and prestige (**v.3, see Matthew 19:30**). What we acquire in excess of need, is but for folly and pride
- Compromise (**v.4, see Matthew 12:30**). If only halfway devoted to God, we are at enmity with him.
- Idolatry (**v.5, see Colossians 3:5**). Where idolatry is the practice, covetousness is the principle.
- Rebellion (**v.6, see Philippians 3:16-17**). The example of good parents and mentors is not to be scorned.
- Entanglement in sin (**v.7, see 2Peter 2:20-22**). A sin wilfully repeated becomes a snare without escape.
- Serving many masters (**v.8, see Matthew 6:24**). The one who serves God can serve no other master.
- Ingratitude (**v.9, see 1Thessalonians 5:18**). Once blessed, give thanks; twice blessed, give your all.

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- Solomon's mistakes are really but various forms of one single fault, namely disobedience. There were many ways in which Solomon erred, but they all boil down to this: "Solomon did not observe what the Lord had commanded" (1Kings 11:10).
- Although Solomon sought wisdom at first, later he became apostate through his foreign wives. He apparently didn't love the Lord the way David did.
- David simply sought fellowship - "to dwell in the house of the Lord forever" Psalm 23:6 Psalm 27:4

The contrast between them is evident. Even though Solomon was given a gift of wisdom he didn't use it on himself and blew it at the end of the day.

Although David blew it too, namely the Bathsheba incident, but he repented and it was real repentance in his heart. David was always focused on the Lord.

The Admonitions

- Doctrinal purity
 - abhorrence of heresy.
- Devotion to our King
 - Left their first love
 - Being too busy on the business of the King rather than for the King Himself.

Primary Admonition

- He wants devotion not just doctrine
- First commandment Deut 6:5 Jesus called it the greatest commandment
- No thought of self, 1 Cor 13
- First Love is the abandonment of all for a Love that has abandoned all

7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Promise to the Overcomer

To **him who overcomes** I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

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The promise finishes the letter. Every letter has this promise but they are not always in the same place. This promise is not in the body of the letter but at the end.

While the letters are addressed to the churches, as a whole, the promises are all to individuals in the church who overcome the problem of the church as a whole. So, to the one who does overcome, and returns to his first love, there is promised the privilege of eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God.

Certain things true of the local church are also true of the Apostolic Church in the second generation stage. This is the type of church that dominated the first period of church history.

- Paul's warning in Acts & John's letter(s): Where's their lampstand *today*?
- Ephesus is now over six miles from the sea, unapproachable by ship.
 - What was a major harbour is now a marsh dense with reeds.
 - What once was the key city in Asia is now a desolation.

Prophetic Profile

Ephesus represents the **Apostolic Church**. Even at the end of the first century (when this was written) the church was in trouble. Thus, even the "Church Fathers" are not a reliable model. Paul's letter to Galatians exhorts not to "perfect in the flesh what was begun in the Spirit."

We are given a model in the Book of Acts. Study to notice the emphasis on the following:

- 1) Focus on the teaching of the Word; [Satan's first challenge is against God's Word; and then to castigate His character.] Used Scripture to *authenticate* their experiences.
- 2) Commitment to assembly and fellowship.
- 3) Breaking of Bread ("in remembrance of me").
- 4) Commitment to prayer.

So before we go into the rest of the letters we need to remind ourselves of the pattern.

At the beginning we saw that there is a design pattern.

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A Name, a title, a commendation, concerns, exhortation, promise to the overcomer, and He that has an ear.....which is the closure of the letter

These seven elements make up each letter. The seventh is the closing phrase.

With Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos they came in a slightly different order. They end after the exhortation with the closure coming first, He who has an ear..... followed by a promise to the overcomer almost like a PS.

With the other 4, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea numbers 6 and 7 are swapped over.

So after the exhortation they get the promise to the Overcomer first and then the closing phrase he who has an ear.....

The lay out of the history of the Church.

Ephesus	The Apostolic Church
Smyrna	The Persecuted Church
Pergamos	The Married Church (worldly)
Thyatira	The Medieval Church
Sardis	Denominational Church
Philadelphia	Missionary Church
Laodicea	Apostate Church (the days we are in now)