

“The Church of Ephesus”

Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction: For the next two chapters, John pens the messages to the seven churches, which are in Asia (1:4, 1:11, 1:19-20). Each of these was literal local New Testament churches referring to the present period (1:19- “...and the things which are...”). Further, they also represent a timeline of the church dispensation describing their spiritual history. Therefore, three views should be taken when studying all seven churches. First, they should be looked at historically as being seven literal churches in Asia. Secondly, they should be perceived as prophetically giving a sketch of the church dispensation. Thirdly, they should assert as personally asking what personal application is given to the individual believer. The following is the basic outline that will be given for all seven churches. Although the last two points may be reversed, this is the basic structure of the message that the Lord had for each church. Then, a second outline is given for the space of time that each church represents. Notice:

1. The Overseer of the Church- *“These things saith he...”*
 2. The Occupation of the Church- *“I know thy works...”*
 3. The Obligation of the Church- *“He that hath an ear, let him hear...”*
 4. The Overcoming of the Church- *“To him that overcometh...”*
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1. Ephesus- “Desirable” A.D. 30-100
 - a. The Careless Church
 - b. The Apostolic Church
 - c. The Fallen Church
 2. Smyrna- “Crushed; Myrrh” A.D. 100-300
 - a. The Crowned Church
 - b. The Afflicted Church
 - c. The Fearful Church
 3. Pergamos- “Married to Worldliness” A.D. 300-500
 - a. The Compromising Church
 - b. The Associated Church
 - c. The Faltering Church
 4. Thyatira- “Continual Sacrifice; Odor of Affliction” A.D. 500-1500
 - a. The Corrupted Church
 - b. The Agnostic Church
 - c. The False Church
 5. Sardis- “Remnant” A.D. 1500-1700
 - a. The Feeble Church
 - b. The Absent Church
 - c. The Fruitless Church
 6. Philadelphia- “Brotherly Love” A.D. 1700-1900
 - a. The Faithful Church
 - b. The Adored Church
 - c. The Feeble Church

7. Laodicea- “Rule of the People” A.D. 1900-Rapture
 - a. The Foolish Church
 - b. The Apostate Church
 - c. The Fashionable Church

(The information to the last outline was taken from Warren Wiersbe, John Phillips, and Ronnie Simpson)

Body: The first church in our study is the church of Ephesus. It was a church that was commenced by Paul, cultivated by Timothy, and concluded with John. Even the physical characteristics of the city allude to its removal. This city was located at the chief port in Asia Minor. John Phillips describes, “Its harbor was given to change because of its continual silting. What was water became land; what was land became water. This shifting character of the city is reflected in the Lord’s letter for the Ephesian assembly.” Although Ephesus was strong in standards, they were drifting in their love for the Master. They even drifted to the point that her tides never came back to the shore. They lost their first love, which led to their removal of their candlestick out of his place. Observe how a serving church turned into a soon removed church.

- I. The Overseer of the Church v. 1- *“These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”*
 - A. He Is Preserving the Minister- *“These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand...” I Chronicles 16:22*
 1. “This portrayal of Christ corresponding to that given early in the first chapter of Revelation is a symbolic presentation of the fact that Christ holds the messengers of these churches in His right hand, a place of sovereign protection as well as divine authority over them.” (Walvoord)
 2. “The messengers, therefore, are held in divine protection and under divine control.” (Walvoord)
 - B. He Is Present in the Meetings- *“...who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”*
- II. The Occupation of the Church vs. 2-6- *“I know thy works...”*
 - A. Their Assessment v. 2- *“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars”*
 1. Assessment of their Toiling- *“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience”*
 2. Assessment of their Taking- *“and how thou canst not bear them which are evil”*
 3. Assessment of their Trial- *“and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” Acts 20:29-30, II John 1:7-11*
 - B. Their Advancement v. 3- *“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”*

1. They Advanced in Service- *“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured”*
 2. They Advanced in Strength- *“and hast not fainted”*
 - a. *“It was not at all easy going at Ephesus.”* (Phillips)
 - b. *“They may not have been very fruitful, but they were certainly faithful.”* (Phillips)
- C. Their Abandonment v. 4- *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”*
1. The Outcome of their Abandonment- *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee”*
 2. The One that they Abandoned- *“because thou hast left thy first love”*
Ephesians 3:17-19, I Thessalonians 1:3, I Corinthians 13:13
 - a. *“The word for love is the deepest and most meaningful word for love found in the Greek language.”* (Walvoord)
 - b. *“Though they had not departed completely from love for God, their love no longer had the fervency, depth, or meaning it once had had in the church.”* (Walvoord)
 - c. Luke 10:38-42
 - d. *“The furnace was still there, but the fire had gone out.”* (Phillips)
 - e. *“Labor is no substitute for love; neither is purity a substitute for passion.”* (Wiersbe)
 - f. *“It is only as we love Christ fervently that we can serve Him faithfully.”* (Wiersbe)
- D. Their Answer v. 5- *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*
1. The Remembrance of the Ephesians- *“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen”*
 2. The Repentance of the Ephesians- *“and repent”* I John 1:9
 - a. *“Religious activity without love is a sin that calls for repentance!”* (Simpson)
 - b. *“America is filled with ‘Ecclesiastical corpses in beautiful caskets’.”* (Simpson)
 3. The Repeating of the Ephesians- *“and do the first works”*
 4. The Removal of the Ephesians- *“or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”*
 - a. *“The church that loses its love will soon lose its light, no matter how doctrinally sound it may be.”* (Wiersbe)
 - b. The phrase, “I will come” is referring to the Lord coming in judgment to the church at Ephesus instead of His Second Coming.
 - c. I Corinthians 11:31- *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”*

- E. Their Abhorrence v. 6- *“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*
1. The Unveiling of their Abhorrence- *“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans”* Psalm 139:21-22
 - a. “Here Paul’s ‘wolves’ are called Nicolaitanes.” (Larkin)
 - b. “They were not a sect, but a party in the Church who were trying to establish a ‘Priestly Order’.” (Larkin)
 - c. “The object was to establish a ‘Holy Order of Men’, and place them over the laity, which was foreign to the New Testament plan, and call them not pastors, but—Clergy, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals, Popes.” (Larkin)
 2. The Unity of their Abhorrence- *“which I also hate”*
 - a. “All too often those who have forgotten how to love specialize in hating error.” (Phillips)
 - b. “Even the endorsement He does give comes almost as an afterthought.” (Phillips)
- III. The Obligation of the Church v. 7- *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”*
- A. The Prerequisites of Hearing- *“He that hath an ear...”*
 1. “Love is a personal matter.” (Phillips)
 2. “We are saved one by one; we must be restored one by one.” (Phillips)
 - B. The Purpose of Hearing- *“let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”*
- IV. The Overcoming of the Church v. 7- *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* I John 5:4-5
- A. The Conqueror’s Provision- *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life...”*
 1. The Banning from the Tree Genesis 3:22-24
 2. The Bringing to the Tree Revelation 22:1-2
 - B. The Conqueror’s Position- *“...which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*
 1. “When Adam fell, he lost Paradise, and he lost access to the tree of life.” (Phillips)
 2. “Here is a fallen church. It too has lost the paradise of bliss that comes from walking with God. The Lord’s call here is a call to individual believers to get back to the daily quiet time with Himself.” (Phillips)

Conclusion: What a stern warning to the church at Ephesus, and to all believers, for forsaking their first love! Did Ephesus ever return? History informs us that they never did. Their light was removed and the city lies in ruins today. Some writers even state that there is not even one witness within its borders. How great the need for Bible believers to labor in love and not forget how important it is to weep and pray, not just work and pray!