

Bible Prophecy and the book of Revelation, Lesson 2

7 Letters to the 7 Churches, Why These Churches

Why these 7 churches? There were so many others such as Rome, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

- 1) We are going to discover that to understand these churches is to understand any church that has ever existed.
 - 2) We are going to discover that there is some of each of these churches in every church.
 - 3) We are going to see the 7 churches ages described for us here; any other order and it wouldn't work. It lays out the history of the church prophetically from the end of Acts to the Rapture.
 - 4) We are going to see that the 7 kingdoms of parables of Matthew 13 track with the same characteristics of these 7 churches and in the same order.
 - 5) We are going to see that these 7 churches also have similar characteristics to the other 7 churches Paul wrote to in the New Testament.
 - 6) We are going to see that each church had a perception of themselves that was inaccurate, and that Jesus corrects.
 - 7) We are going to see that even in the first century the church was having problems; the only reliable model in the church was in Acts.
 - 8) We are going to see that some, if not many, of our preconceived notions about the church will be shattered, **Revelation 2:1-7**.
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1. Historical background of the city of Ephesus

- ✓ Founded in 1400 B.C. before king David; history of poor leadership throughout the years
 - ✓ Jealously sought after because of its unusual port
 - ✓ Architecturally: Had a theater that was 495' in diameter and could seat 25,000 people
 - ✓ Most outstanding feature = Temple to Diana or Artemis = One of the 7 wonders of the Ancient World
 - ✓ City was the center for arts and magic
 - ✓ Paul ministers here for several years very successfully
 - ✓ He returns through the area after his last missionary journey and speaks to this church that he started, **Acts 20: 17-28**.
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2. Exposition of the text

- ✓ **V. 1** Lampstands = bearers of light – filled with oil (symbol of the Holy Spirit)
 - ✓ Jesus is right in the middle of these! Where is Jesus today? In the midst of His churches.
 - ✓ **V. 2** "I know your deeds" = He isn't guessing; He knows what we are and aren't doing. He is a manager and owner who is constantly on the job.
 - ✓ "I know your works, labor, perseverance..." has a similar ring to **I Thess. 1:3** except love is conspicuously absent = casualty of heresy hunting!
 - ✓ What they did well was to test doctrine = no surprise given the warning Paul gives them in Acts 20.
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- ✓ Should we be able to test doctrine; YES! But be careful of the tendency to let doctrine be the end for you and not the means to the end of loving God and others.
 - ✓ **Verse 3** Good News, **verse 4** Bad News; can you here the pink slip coming?
 - ✓ We get so proud of that our doctrine is pure and that we believe the right stuff, which is important, but **not the most important thing!**
 - ✓ "first love" = best love = highest priority love in your life. This letter is about Love!!!
 - ✓ Isn't it interesting that the mechanism that God chose to demonstrate Christ's relationship with His Church is marriage?
 - ✓ Does Jesus get your time? Would you call your relationship with Him intimate?
 - ✓ The Ephesian church was so busy on the King's business that they had no time for the King!!!
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- ✓ Only one thing more important than doctrine and that is Devotion!
 - ✓ Why did God save you? Was it to make heaven better? Because of our intelligence, our incredible abilities, our doctrine?
 - ✓ God saved us so that you could be His; is He getting what He paid for?
 - ✓ What is the greatest commandment?
 - ✓ Doctrine is great as long as it is a means to an end and not an end in itself. The end being, "I want to know you Lord."
 - ✓ What did Solomon ask for? Wisdom. What did David ask for? Fellowship. **Psalms 27:4.**
 - ✓ Compared to the Ephesians: Solomon wanted Doctrine = Good; David wanted Fellowship = Best!!
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- ✓ **1st Cor. 13:1-3** We can have all the workings of the Spirit and not have love, and we are nothing!!!
 - ✓ **Philippians 3:10-11.**
 - ✓ Ephesus means "Darling" or "Maiden of Choice"
 - ✓ The main burden of the letter is a Husband calling to His bride, "I appreciate all that you do for me, but you have no time for ME!!"
 - ✓ **Verse 5** "Remember, Repent, Repeat" We have a notion that if we are theologically sound God approves of us.
 - ✓ Is this true? What happens to a church that loses its lamp stand?
 - ✓ **Verse 6** "Nicolaitans" = untranslated Greek word = Nikao = "to conquer" (Nike="means to conquer")
 - ✓ Laos = people or laity. The tragedy of the early Church = Concept of the Clergy (i.e.. Above the people)
 - ✓ **1st Pet. 5:2-3** Should we follow our leaders? **Hebrews 13:17.**
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- ✓ **Verse 7** "He who has an ear..." = catch phrase in every letter. It changes positions in the letter to Thyatira and following.
 - ✓ "To him who overcomes..." = Who is this? **1st John 5:4-5.**
 - ✓ "Tree of Life" What is this? Genesis tree in the Garden.
 - ✓ The Bible is essentially the story of two trees: Tree of Life and Tree of Death
 - ✓ The Bible is essentially the story of two gardens: Garden of Eden and The Garden of Gethsemane.
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Where is the Ephesus church today? *Gone.* Even in the early church they were having problems.

The Church of Acts is the only model of how to do church right; it had 4 passions.

1. Focus on the teaching of the Word. Satan's first line attack is: "Hath God Said?"
2. Deep commitment to community; Satan loves to get a sheep alone!!
3. Committed to the breaking of Bread.
4. Heavy into prayer which is the heavy artillery in the believers' arsenal.

Ephesus represents the age of the early church which lasted from Jesus' ascension to about 100 A.D.
