

The Book of Revelation

Lesson Four

Revelation 2:1-7

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Introduction:

1. The book of Revelation begins with the image of Jesus in close fellowship with His followers, the churches.
2. This vision is followed by a letter addressed to each of these seven congregations.
3. Ephesus was located on the western coast of Asia Minor, 100 miles west of Colossae.
4. The Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders) was located in Ephesus.
5. It was a wealthy and prosperous city.
6. It was also a “free” city; Rome allowed its citizens to govern themselves.
7. It was made up of Jews, Gentiles, pagans, and mystics.

I. The Church in Ephesus

- A. Before he left Ephesus, Paul gave warnings to the elders of the congregation (Acts 20:18-38).
- B. About five years later (circa AD 60), from his prison cell in Rome Paul penned a letter back to this congregation.
- C. The book of Ephesians builds upon Paul’s experiences, teachings, and warnings in the city of Ephesus.
- D. **Chapter One** – Jesus the Christ: *The Head of the Church*
- E. **Chapter Two** – Grace and Faith: *The Salvation of the Church*
- F. **Chapter Three** – Inspiration: *The Revelation of the Church*
- G. **Chapter Four** – Truth: *The Unity of the Church*
- H. **Chapter Five** – Family: *The Purity of the Church*
- I. **Chapter Six** – Armor: *The Warfare of the Church*
- J. How clear it should be to all Christians from the story of the church in Ephesus that God is more powerful than Satan and, by being in Christ, we are assured of victory!

II. The Challenge in Ephesus

- A. About 5 years after he wrote the epistle to the Ephesians, and about 10 years after he left Ephesus (AD 65), Paul wrote a letter to his “son in the faith,” Timothy.
- B. Some two and a half or three years later (AD 68), Paul wrote his final inspired epistle, also addressed to Timothy.
- C. At the time of these writings, Timothy was laboring with the church in Ephesus.
- D. By the time of these writings, the Ephesians were facing great challenges.
- E. **THE CHALLENGE IN DOCTRINE**
- G. **THE CHALLENGE IN DISCIPLINE**
- H. **THE CHALLENGE IN DEVOTION**
- I. Clearly, the church at Ephesus was facing grave threats.
- J. In only ten years, error had begun to infiltrate the church – from the eldership to the worship services to the person in the pew.

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- III. The Change in Ephesus
- A. History indicates that the apostle John also lived and worked in Ephesus.
 - B. What an historic congregation – to be able to hear and grow under the preaching of Paul, Timothy, John and (according to tradition) Luke!
 - C. The final biblical record of the church at Ephesus comes some 30 years after Paul’s epistles to Timothy were written (35 years after the book of Ephesians and 40 years after Paul left the city).
 - D. This record is an epistle to the church at Ephesus from Jesus the Christ, written by the hand of John and recorded in Revelation 2:1-7.
 - E. **2:1a – Salutation**
 - F. **2:1b – Description of Jesus**
 - G. **2:2-3 – Commendation**
 - 1. The Ephesians were commended for their work, labor, and endurance.
 - 2. They were commended for resisting those who were wicked and troublesome.
 - 3. They were commended for putting men and their doctrines to the test.
 - a. They did not accept a claim of apostleship on face value.
 - b. They had been warned by Paul and Timothy of those who would be “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”
 - 4. They were commended for doing the work of the church.
 - H. **2:4 – Condemnation**
 - 1. In spite of all the good things about the church at Ephesus, there existed a fundamental problem – she had left her first love.
 - 2. She had lost her initial love for Christ.
 - 3. She had lost her love for her brethren (cf. Ephesians 1:15).
 - 4. She had lost her love for lost souls.
 - a. In her early days, the church in Ephesus was evangelistic – to all Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).
 - b. Perhaps this church had turned her attention inward and failed to love those outside the body of Christ.
 - c. Could it be that they focused on defending the Gospel to the exclusion of extending the Gospel?
 - I. **2:5 – Warning**
 - 1. Remember – *God’s Word and their former obedience.*
 - 2. Repent – *Change their attitudes and be as they once were.*
 - 3. Removal – *Without the former, they would be separated from Christ.*
 - J. **2:6 – Exhortation**
 - K. **2:7 – Blessings**
 - 1. Tree of Life – *Eternal life...*
 - 2. Paradise of God – *Heaven...*
 - 3. Overcome – *Those who are faithful unto death (2:10)...*