

Ephesians

Lesson Twenty-One The Change in Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction:

1. The record of the church at Ephesus begins in Acts 18 – 20 and continues in the books of Ephesians, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy.
2. Faithful Christians labored with this congregation through the years – Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos, Paul, and Timothy.
3. History indicates that the apostle John also lived and worked in Ephesus. *{There is also a tradition that Luke worked there as well.}*
 - a. Many of the early “church fathers” wrote of John’s work in Ephesus – including Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.
 - b. Irenaeus claimed that John wrote his account of the Gospel while at Ephesus.
 - c. Clement stated that John returned to Ephesus after being exiled to the island of Patmos, where he penned the book of Revelation.
 - d. Eusebius claimed that John died and was buried in the city of Ephesus.
4. The final inspired record of the church at Ephesus comes in the book of Revelation – and, it reveals a congregation in danger of changing from God’s desired plan.
5. This passage (Revelation 2:1-7), was written about 40 years after Paul left the city of Ephesus – 35 years after the book of Ephesians and 30 years after 1 & 2 Timothy.
6. Of course, this passage is an epistle to the church at Ephesus from Jesus the Christ.

- I. The Things That Had Continued (Revelation 2:1-3)
 - A. In spite of the errors of men, the Lord remains constant.
 1. He holds the messengers of His faithful congregations.
 2. He walks in fellowship with His faithful congregations.
 3. He knows what happens with His faithful congregations.
 - B. The church at Ephesus had continued its good works.
 1. “Works” = “Acts, deeds, toiling”
 2. “Labor” = “Intense work joined with trouble and/or pain; trouble”
 3. “Patience” = “Endurance; steadfastness; perseverance”
 - C. The church at Ephesus had continued its resistance of sinfulness (cf. vs.6).
 - D. The church at Ephesus had continued its rejection of error.
 1. They did not accept a claim of apostleship on face value.
 2. They had been warned of “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” so they put their teachers to the test.
 - E. The church at Ephesus had continued its diligent perseverance.
- II. The Things That Had Changed (Revelation 2:4)
 - A. In spite of all the good done by the church at Ephesus, something had changed.
 - B. They had left their first love.
 1. To love the Lord is to obey His commands (John 14:15).
 2. To restore their “first love,” they needed to do the “first works” (vs.5).
 3. Thus, there was some area of disobedience among the Christians in Ephesus.

- C. They needed to obey, but with the right motivation.
 - 1. Consider a marriage in its “honeymoon” phase as an example of “first love.”
 - 2. Consider a new convert in Christ as an example of “first love.”
 - 3. Perhaps they had lost their love...
 - a. For Christ
 - b. For the church
 - c. For the lost
- D. They needed to return to doing the “first works” (cf. Acts 2:42).
 - 1. Continue in the apostles’ doctrine – *study, meditate, teach*
 - 2. Continue in fellowship – *love, care, visit, help*
 - 3. Continue in breaking of bread – *worship, praise, learn, assemble*
 - 4. Continue in prayer – *thanksgiving, intercession, supplication*

- III. The Things That Were Commanded (Revelation 2:5-7)
 - A. Remember
 - B. Repent
 - C. Restore
 - D. Removal
 - E. Reward
 - 1. Overcome (2:10)
 - 2. Tree of Life
 - 3. Paradise of God

Conclusion:

- 1. The church at Ephesus faced many threats and struggles.
- 2. They worked diligently to maintain doctrinal purity in the face of false teachers.
- 3. However, they left their first love and were in danger of judgment from the Lord.
- 4. Christians and congregations must engage the battle on all fronts – defensive and offensive.
- 5. We must always be willing to reevaluate and to repent.