

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



LESSON 02

The Seven Churches 01

EPHESUS

“Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 3:22

Revelation 2:1-7

A Call for Faithfulness and Endurance

TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Revelation 2: 1-7 (CSB)

2 “Write to the angel^[a] of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands: ² I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars. ³ I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. ⁵ Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in^[c] the paradise of God.

Revelation 2: 1-7 (NIV)

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. ² I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ³ You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. ⁵ Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. ⁶ But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Revelation 2: 1-7 (NT Wright Translation)

1Write this to the angel of the church in Ephesus. "These are the words of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, and who walks in among the seven golden lampstands. 2I know what you have done, your hard labour and patience. I know that you cannot tolerate evil people, and that you have tested those who pass themselves off as apostles, but are not, and you have demonstrated them to be frauds. 3You have patience, and you have put up with a great deal because of my name, and you haven't grown weary. 4I do, however, have one thing against you: you have abandoned the love you showed at the beginning. 5So remember the place from which you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at the beginning. If not - if you don't repent - I will come and remove your lampstand out of its place. 6You do, though, have this in your favour: you hate what the Nicolaitans are doing, and I hate it too. 7Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches. The tree of life stands in God's paradise, and I will give to anyone who conquers the right to eat from it."

Read *Revelation For Everyone* pages 10-14, *Letter to Ephesus*

Jot down and insights, notes, or quotes that inspired and encouraged you in this reading.

What did this reading teach you about the city of Ephesus? How does help you understand the message that Jesus is conveying in this letter to that church?

What questions or concerns do you have based on this reading?

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Sermon on Revelation 2: 1-7 – Ephesus

- What were some things that the pastor shares about the city and history of Ephesus and how did that information connect with the message that Jesus was giving to the church?
- What were some of the symbolic images that the pastor talked about and how did that help you understand the message Jesus was relaying to the church in Ephesus?
- What did the pastor say was the central message that God gave Ephesus and how does that message connect/relate with us?
- How did the pastor help you understand this portion of Revelation, who Jesus is and his desire for the church?
- Share with you group any questions you had based on Sunday's message.

SERMON NOTES:

Small Group Lesson 2: Letter to Ephesus

OPENING ACTIVITY: Designing Church Building Meaning

For lessons 2-8 your small group will be doing an activity to your group help connect the themes of Revelation 2-3 and have fun along the way. Your small group leader will have the supplies you need to complete these activities and they will build on each other as the weeks progress.

Week One: Design a Church

Instructions: Choose church coloring page. Color it and give it a name. Once you are done coloring it, cut it out and place it on your backdrop.

Share: Share your church with the group. What did you name it? Why did you choose to design your church the way you did?

Discuss: What are some foundational moments in the history of our church for you? Why do you feel these moments are important?

OPENING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, our church, and all your people. Give us the strength to remain faithful and endure. In Jesus Name, Amen.

READ REVELATION 2:1-7

Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars. I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

NT WRIGHT: REVELATION FOR EVERYONE:

Letter to Ephesus pages 10-14

Before this week's session you were invited to read and reflect on insights from N.T. Wright about the letter to Ephesus. As a group, share your insights, inspiration, and encouragement from the reading.

What were some insights, notes, or quotes that inspired you in this reading?

How did this reading help you better understand the letter to Ephesus?

How did this reading encourage you to remain faithful and endure?

What questions or concerns do you have based on this reading?

SERMON REVIEW

Take some time to reflect on this past Sunday's message, considering the pastor's main theme and how you were encouraged to apply this passage to your own faith journey.

What was the pastor's main theme in this Sunday's message?

How did the pastor help you see Jesus in this passage?

How did the pastor help you see yourself in this passage?

How were you encouraged to apply this passage to your life?

What questions do you have based on this week's sermon?

ABOUT EPHEBUS:

Read the selection from Discipleship on the Edge to learn about the history and culture of this city.

Selection: *From chapter three – The City of Ephesus.*

When Revelation was written, Ephesus was the fourth-largest city in the Roman Empire. In 96 AD the population of Ephesus was about 225,000. It was in every sense an urban center, a cosmopolitan center, a world class city.

Ephesus was a major financial center, not only for Asia minor but for the ancient world at large. Its banks held huge monetary deposits and it had the most important seaport in western coast of Asia. This meant that people from many different nations ended up in Ephesus. Ephesus was home to the pan Indian games, surpassed in grandeur only by the Olympic Games held in Athens. Ephesus was a city where people could look on the pageant and panorama of Greco-Roman life in all its brilliance.

Ephesus was proud to be the home of the worship of the mother goddess Artemis (the Greeks called her Diana). She was the fertility God, the embodiment of sexuality and the embodiment of sexual lust. Her temple in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was built on a platform measuring more than 100,000 square feet, twice the size of a football field. It had 100 stone columns, made of marble, each 55 feet high.

In 29 BC Ephesus became one of the Centers for the worship of the goddess Dea Roma and the center for the emperor cult. The chief way Rome honored its subject cities for their loyalty was to allow the city to build a temple to the emperors. Ephesus was given the honor four times! The temple of Domitian, who demanded to be worshipped as God, had eight stone columns, each 46 feet high, and 5 feet in diameter. The city had an Amphitheatre that could seat 2400 people.

In that center of business, politics and religious pluralism emerged the most influential churches in the history of Christianity.

What insights did you gain and how did it help you understand the culture in which this message was written?

STRUCTURE OF THE SEVEN LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

QUOTE: NT Wright

The seven letters are sharp and pointed messages to the church in question, and other Christian churches already in the area, and to all churches then and now, who can listen in to what the risen Lord is saying. The letters follow the same pattern. They begin with a reminder of some aspect of the description of Jesus in chapter one. They continue by congratulating the church on what has been going well and then warning them about what has been going badly. The letters end with a warning and promise.

The Spirit is speaking to the churches, calling Christians to conquer and promising them some aspect of the future the glorious future which God has in store... They are to conquer, not by fighting back, but by following Jesus, who won the victory through his own patient suffering. God's people must bear patient witness to Jesus, thereby conquering the evil forces that surround and threaten them.

The messages to the seven churches have a repeated pattern.

Introduction: Write to the church of...

Jesus' Description: Using imagery from Revelation 1, Jesus highlights a section of his character.

Encouragement: Jesus acknowledges what they are doing right, "I know..."

Warning: Jesus addresses a issue with the church. "But I have this against you..."

Advice: Jesus shares how to make things right with God

Reward: Jesus shares the reward for remaining faithful (conquering). "To the one who conquers:"

Conclusion: "Anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says."

REREAD REVELATION 2:1-7

Using what you know about Ephesus, the symbolism in this passage, and insights from Darrell Johnson, NT Wright and sermons, answer the following questions.

What images does Jesus use to introduce himself in and what do they say about Jesus' character?

How are these images meant to encourage or rebuke the church?

What does Jesus say this church is doing right?

How might this church be encouraged by this?

What does Jesus have against this church? What issue does Jesus address and why is this issue important to Jesus?

What might this issue look like in our church and our lives today?

Quote: NT Wright

The Ephesian believers have drawn a clear line between those who are really following Jesus and those who are not. As all church workers know, a group that is rightly concerned for the truth of the gospel may forget that the very heart of the gospel is love.

What can we do to help maintain this delicate balance between truth and love in our own churches today?

What advice does Jesus give this church in order to be right with God?

What might this advice look like for our church and in our lives?

What is the reward for those who conquer and what encouragement would the first readers gain from this reward?

QUOTE: Darrell Johnson

The tree of life is found in the first pages of the Bible and in the last. It is there in the first creation, in the middle of the Garden of Eden. It is there in the new creation in the middle of the city of God. In the first creation the way to it is blocked. No one can get to it. It represents all the goodness of life the Lord of life longs to share with those who love him. In the first creation, because of sin, the way to it is blocked. In the new creation the blocks have been removed because of the blood of the lamb. By the death of Jesus, the way has been opened. And it turns out that the tree of life is Jesus himself.

How can this reward encourage us to remain faithful and endure?

APPLICATION:

As you wrap up this week's study, take a moment to reflect on the central message found in this letter to Ephesus, how it is relevant today, and how we can apply this message to our lives and our church.

What is the central message to the church in Ephesus?

Why was that relevant then and why is it relevant now?

How can we apply this message to the "Church"?

How can we apply this message to our church, and how should it inspire us for the future?

How can we apply this message to our own lives so that we can remain faithful and endure?

CLOSE IN PRAYER:

Share with the group and praises or prayer requests.

How can the group pray for each other to remain faithful and endure based on this week's study?

Heavenly Father, give us eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to us, our church, and all your people. [insert requests and/or insights here] Give us the strength to remain faithful and endure. In Jesus Name, Amen.