

As Chapter 2 begins, Jesus starts by issuing encouragement, correction and blessing to 7 churches in Asia minor. Before we get into each Church specifically, lets first get an overview of the cities and what Jesus had to say.

<u>The Church</u>	<u>Christ's Message</u>	<u>The Blessing</u>
1. <u>Ephesus</u>	They had lost their first love	
2. <u>Smyrna</u>	They were enduring tribulation	
3. <u>Pergamum</u>	They held onto false doctrine	
4. <u>Thyatira</u>	They were tolerating a Jezebel	
5. <u>Sardis</u>	They had people dying spiritually	
6. <u>Philadelphia</u>	They were given an open door	
7. <u>Laodicea</u>	They were lukewarm and would be spit out	

There is a debate among scholars concerning a theory that teaches these seven churches also represent seven different church ages. The seven time periods are divided as follows:

The Church	The Church Age	The General Time Frame
Ephesus	The Apostolic Church	30-100 AD
Smyrna	The Persecuted Church	100-312 AD
Pergamos	The Roman Church	313-600 AD
Thyatira	The Dark Ages	600-1517 AD
Sardis	The Reformation Church	1517-1700 AD
Philadelphia	The Missions Church	1648-21 st Century AD
Laodicea	The Lukewarm Church	the Present situation

As we look at the 7 churches, we are going to use 3 methods of Bible study:

- 1) The _____ perspective will cover the historical setting of each Church in the 1st century and what it meant to them
- 2) The _____ perspective will cover our personal application for Church and Christian life today and what it reveals to us about our own walk
- 3) The _____ perspective will cover how these 7 churches have remarkable similarity to those 7 successive periods of Church history mentioned above

Lets get into it:

Our first city is Ephesus. The cities name means “the desired one”. In Revelation 2:2-4, Christ diagnosis’ the Church in Ephesus with mostly positive praise and one correction. First the praise:

It was a _____; the church was known for its good works. One of the purposes for the local church is to “stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24). We are not saved BY good works but we are saved FOR good works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

It was a _____; Christ wrote that the Ephesians had “persevered and had patience” in their work and labor. Their patience wasn’t passive, but active. They were patiently enduring suffering as they went about serving Christ. Biblical patience is proactive in its endurance. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon described the kind of “grit” the Ephesian church possessed when he said,

“Pray God to send a few men with what the Americans call “grit’ in them; men who when they know a thing to be right, will not turn away, or turn aside, or stop; men who will persevere all the more because there are difficulties to meet or foes to encounter; who stand all the more true to their Master because they are opposed...”

It was a _____; Christ identified the discipline of the Ephesians when he said in verse 2, “I know....that you cannot bear those who are evil.” They would not tolerate evil or unrighteousness in their midst and would exercise church discipline when it was needed. (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Titus 3:10-11)

It was a _____; Their discernment was evident when they “tested” those who claimed to be apostles “ and have found them to be liars”. There would be know shortage of false apostles in the early or latter years of Church history-men who claimed to have been granted authority by Christ’s true apostles to lead churches. But the Ephesian church rejected these by knowing the truth of the Word. (Matthew 24:4-5)

Now the Correction: (Hebrews12:5)

It was a _____; this was the one thing Christ held against them. He said, “Nevertheless I have this one thing against you, that you have lost your first love.” Everything about the church looked good on the outside but on the inside they had heart trouble. Their devotion to Christ was waning. It serves as a reminder to us that it is possible to do the works of ministry without being in love with Him! The Weymouth translation of the New Testament states verse 4 like this: “Yet I have this against you, that you no longer love Me as you did at first.”

Praise God Jesus doesn't end there! He then gives them instructions on how to return to their first love in verse 5. He tells them the 3 "R's"

- 1) _____: He tells them to, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen". If we have left something or someone, the first step is to remember where we started. In this case, it means remembering, thinking back on, what ones relationship with Christ was when we were first saved and growing in Him. We lived our lives as a matter of trust: God said it, we believed it, and that settled it! Somewhere in the mix, our energy and passion dissipated. We became professional Christians. We go through the motions of doing the works without the passion. We settle into the routine instead of growing in the relationship. The Greek from used in "remember" in verse 5 is present active imperative. In other words, Jesus is telling them and us "keep on remembering your starting place with me".
- 2) _____: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent...." Repentance means to change your mind; it means to reverse course and go in the opposite direction. It is less a matter of weeping and wailing than it is a conscious choice of the will a decision to first turn and then return. Only when we turn around and go back to where we began with Christ will we do what he told the Ephesians to do: Remember. We never get back on the right road by remaining on the wrong road.
- 3) _____: After remembering and repenting and getting back to where we began, there is a third step: Repeat the former good works. Christ praised them works, labor, patience, discipline, and discernment. What they needed to do is what we need to as well: go and do the first works all over again. Paul tells the Corinthian church in chapter 13 that love is a verb not just a noun. That is also true of our love for Christ-it is demonstrated by actions that show our love for him. Those are the actions to which we are to return to.

Christ continued with the instructions by including a warning: “If you do not repent and do the first works, I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place.” That is, the church’s influence and power would be removed. **There is a price to pay for drifting away from the Lord. Today, Ephesus is no longer a light for Christ.**

Its sobering to think about that a Church could have its power and influence removed by Jesus for losing her first love! If that is something that is bringing conviction to your heart right now I want to encourage you to do the exact thing Jesus told the Ephesus church to do: Repent and Remember and Repeat!

The 2nd Church: Smyrna

It is known as the suffering church. This church is one of two of the seven churches to which Christ said nothing negative. The city's name means Myrrh, an aromatic fragrance used in anointing specifically bodies prepared for burial. Like the aromatic oil released by the crushing of a local plant, the believers in Smyrna were releasing the fragrant aroma of Christ in spite of their suffering.

Why they were persecuted?

Because they would not bow the knee to worship Caesar and foreign gods!

Remember from past teachings: Rome allowed you to worship whoever you wanted as long as you worshipped the Emperor/government above all others!

Jesus would summarize their suffering in three ways:

- 1) Pressure: Christ wrote to the Smyrna church, "I know your...tribulation." The Greek word for tribulation literally means pressure-like placing a boulder on a person's chest until it crushes them to death.