

## Revelation 2:1-7

### THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS

#### Part 1

The seven churches addressed in chapters 2 and 3 were actual existing churches when John wrote. While not precisely the same, they also represent the types of churches that are seen throughout the church age. Except for Smyrna and Philadelphia, the other five churches were rebuked for tolerating sin in their midst. Laodicea, the last church (which some believe is the last church age), ends in apostasy.

#### A RICH HISTORY

It is altogether possible, that no church in history had as rich a heritage as did the congregation at Ephesus. As a result of this rich history, it is believed by some that the church in Ephesus was the mother church in Asia Minor. It was out of the church in Ephesus that the church in Smyrna has its origin; the same is true of Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

The history of the church in Ephesus began while Paul was on his second missionary journey. Paul had left Athens, and came to Corinth where he came into contact with a Jew by the name of Aquila and his wife Priscilla.

Both Paul and Aquila were tentmakers. Therefore, Paul lived with them while in Corinth. Every Sabbath Paul went into the synagogue and reasoned with them out of the scriptures, as a result Jews and Greeks alike were persuaded (saved).

However, not all went well. Paul testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ (the Messiah). The Jews became furious. They opposed and blasphemed Paul to the point that he shook his clothing and said, “Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6). With these words, Paul left and went next door to the synagogue into a house. The house belonged unto a man by the name of Justus, who was a worshiper of God.

Then the Bible says something wonderful happened. “Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized: (Acts 18:8).

After this, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. It appears that the vision occurred because of an inward struggle that Paul was facing. The many Corinthian converts had intensified the opposition that Paul was already facing in the Jewish community. Therefore, he was struggling with whether to continue at Corinth, or leave. The vision was a result of this struggle that Paul was dealing with.

The vision was intended to encourage Paul to continue preaching. We see in this vision that God gave Paul four reasons to continue preaching in Corinth (ref. Acts 18:9-10). First, it was a command: “Be not afraid, but speak [go on speaking], and hold not thy peace.” Second, God’s simple reminder: “I am with you.” Third, God’s promise: “No man shall set on thee to hurt

thee.” Fourth, God’s purpose: “I have much people in this city.” With these words, Paul continued in Corinth a year and six months.

However, Paul and the ministry in Corinth were not without problems. The Jewish opponents made insurrection (an open revolt) against Paul, and brought him before the judgment seat of Rome. Rome was not at all concerned with the Jewish complaint, and drove them from the judgment seat. To vent their anger, Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue was brought before the judgment seat and beaten to death. But, Paul continued at Corinth a good while.

Afterwards Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila left Corinth and came to Ephesus. While in Ephesus Paul would enter the synagogue and reason from the scriptures with the Jews. The Jews desired him to tarry, but Paul would not stay long. However, he would return on his third missionary journey. He leaves Ephesus, and he leaves at Ephesus Priscilla and Aquila. Paul travels over the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order to strengthen the disciples of that area.

While on his travels, a man by the name of Apollos who was from Alexandria Egypt came to Ephesus. Apollos was a man of words and ideas (eloquent). Too, he was a man that was mighty in the scriptures (Old Testament). He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being filled with enthusiasm for the things of God, he taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. Apollos was what we call an Old Testament saint. Since he had accepted the message by John the Baptist that Messiah was coming, we know, he believed that Jesus was the Lamb of God.

However, he was limited on his knowledge of Jesus. As of yet, he did not understand the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection. Nor did he understand the work of the Spirit and the birth of the church. But all of this would change.

One day in the synagogue Apollos was speaking with great boldness, and Aquila and Priscilla were present and heard his boldness. After the discourse, Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately. When this happened he exploded, not with anger, but with a zeal that was unmatched. He mightily refuted the Jews, publicly demonstrating by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

Paul now on his third missionary journey came again to Ephesus. The groundwork for the church has already been laid. Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos have prepared the way for Paul.

Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul first encounters twelve men who were in some respect like Apollos, Old Testament saints who followed the teaching of John the Baptist. Paul preached unto them the gospel, they believed and were baptized. That is how the church at Ephesus was born – a work according to Acts chapter 20 and verse 31 that would last three years. Three years of building a solid spiritual foundation – this is essential to any church. The church of Ephesus had a rich heritage and history.

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