

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## Chapters 2-3 – Church History – Seven Letters to Seven Churches

### THE EPHESUS LETTER – REVELATION 2:1-7

After the necessary introduction to Revelation 2-3 last Sunday, we can now begin our textual study starting with the letter to the church in Ephesus. It is relevant to know that this is the \_\_\_\_\_ NT epistle written to this admirable local church, the first being sent by the apostle Paul while he was under house arrest in Rome. His larger NT epistle simply titled *Ephesians* is proof positive verifying the good things that John writes in his \_\_\_\_\_ letter found here in Revelation.

As we will see throughout our study of these seven churches, although they have commendations, they all also have condemnations. Today we focus our attention on the *Ephesus letter*. Be prepared to \_\_\_\_\_ important things that can help us in our daily walk with God.

#### The name Ephesus means:

- Appealing, desirable; \_\_\_\_\_

#### There is a positive commendation given:

1. They were a church with good strong character – Rev. 2:1-3
  - Hard working
  - Doctrinally sound
  - Persevering
2. They \_\_\_\_\_ the same thing Jesus hates – verse 6
  - a. This term *Nicolaitans* is a transliteration from the Greek words...
    - Nico (Nikao) = To destroy; to \_\_\_\_\_ — Laitan (Laos) = Laity; \_\_\_\_\_ ordinary people
  - b. Nicolaitans – conquerors of common men; a religious clergy class that is \_\_\_\_\_ the average person, a hierarchical religious class that lords over common folks – Mt. 12:37

### There is a negative condemnation given:

1. They left their first love – The \_\_\_\_\_ word and the \_\_\_\_\_ Word (Jesus Christ) – Rev. 2:4-5
2. They must \_\_\_\_\_ or else lose the ability to shine as a \_\_\_\_\_ in darkness

### Three basic applications of the Ephesus letter:

1. Historically – 90 AD – 96 AD
  - All the things listed in the commendation and condemnation were true in the Ephesus church in 90 AD. John's letter to them came at just the right time, it was not too late, if they would just \_\_\_\_\_ (repent, remember, do the first works) – Rev. 2:1-7
2. Doctrinally – 90 AD – 175/200 AD (Church History)
  - a. The Ephesus time in church history was a fully purposed church period that spread the gospel, made disciples, and planted churches... They used a line of Bible manuscripts that can be traced back to Antioch, Syria where they were first called "Christians" ...

However, they began to \_\_\_\_\_ from the words of God by using other non-biblical titles, words, phrases, and concepts—this is the same time period referred to as the "*Church Fathers*"

    - Examples of errors from men referred to by scholars (Nicolaitans) as our *church fathers*:
      - Clement of Rome - Spoke of a division between the Pastor and the Common man
      - Ignatius – He is the first to use the word " \_\_\_\_\_ " meaning universal, in place of words like: common, every man, the world, etc.; He refers to himself as the "*Son of the Church.*"
      - Papias – Wrote the "Explanation of the Lord's Discourses"
      - Epicurus - Merges Christianity with \_\_\_\_\_
      - Basilides – He promoted *higher learning*; He said that Christ was only human in appearance
      - Polycarp – He said, "*Faith is the \_\_\_\_\_ of us all.*" The ultimate result years later was the belief that salvation comes through the church
      - Justin Martyr – Started teaching baptismal regeneration. It all began by sprinkling babies...
      - Origen Adamantius – Pioneered the *Allegorical Method of Bible Study*. The Bible is only spiritual, not to be taken literally.
    - These deviations eventually become the \_\_\_\_\_ of lies used by Satan to establish his counterfeit religious system worldwide. These pseudo-Christian religious systems will ultimately merge into the one-world-religion of the antichrist during the tribulation period.

- b. As we read in Acts 19 and here in Rev. 2:2-6, they were plagued with wolves dressed as sheep who sought to destroy the work of God through lies and by gaining leadership over the church body, saying they were representatives of God (apostles) but who were actually the servants of the Devil. Interestingly...

Just prior to this time in church history a diabolical *religious and theological* school was started in Alexandria, Egypt by a man named Philo (20 BC – 50 AD). During the Ephesus period of Church History, the school was led by false apostles, namely: Panteus, Clement of Alexandria, and ultimately the Kingpin or Godfather of false doctrine and \_\_\_\_\_ false Bibles – Adamantius Origen. Origen is called by scholars and most modern church leaders as our greatest church father.

- What Origen believed:

He believed God through the Holy Ghost inspired men to write the Bible

He believed Jesus was the virgin born Son of God

He believed Jesus died on a cross, was buried, and rose on the third day

He did not believe Genesis 1-3 was literal

He believed in the allegorical method of Bible study (except for Mt. 19:12)

He believed Christ was a created sub-god, not God—the second member of the Godhead

He believed the Holy Spirit was a created being or force

He believed that genuine salvation was by works, not grace alone

He believed in baptismal regeneration and the sprinkling of babies

He believed Jesus' death was paid as a ransom to Satan

He did not believe in a literal hell, but a *purgatory* place of temporary penance

He believed in ultimate *universal* salvation for all

He believed the Devil would be saved one day

He denied the bodily resurrection, but spiritualized it

He denied the coming millennial kingdom

He believed in the pre-existence of the human soul

- Origen's life and work:

He is called the *Father of textual criticism*

He wrote the infamous "*Hexapla*"

He altered the Antiochian Bible texts in over 30,000 places to agree with his own personal lifestyle, philosophies, and beliefs

He castrated himself in 231 AD and was excommunicated from the church at Alexandria

He then went to Caesarea to establish another so-called *Christian School*

By this time, he was an established author who wrote over 6000 volumes

In 249 AD, under the Decian Persecution, Origen was arrested and tortured

Though the torture did not kill him, in 254 AD he died from the aftereffects

He bequeathed his library to his favorite student, Pamphilus

When Pamphilus dies in 309 AD, he passes on the corrupted bible readings to one of his disciples, the famous church historian and bishop of Caesarea, a man named Eusebius

All modern English bible versions are traced back to Eusebius from Origen, all English bibles except one—the Authorized Version, the \_\_\_\_\_ Bible of 1611 ...

- Throughout this period of church history (90-175/200 AD), there remained faithful believers who loved God and served him. They were true to the teachings of the Bible. They performed their mission with the spirit of 1 Thess. 2:4. However, those men who were considered leaders of the churches—those viewed as replacing the apostles during this *the age of the church fathers*, began to slowly \_\_\_\_\_ from the clear teachings of the Bible (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9). When this happened there was an eventual and inescapable corruption of our Christian lineage.

### 3. Devotionally – 2025 AD

a. The *Ephesian letter* sets a *positive* example for us to follow (see their commendation)

b. The *Ephesian letter* sets a *negative* contrast for us to avoid (see their condemnation)

- Because of what took place during this period of church history they believed:

There is \_\_\_\_\_ final authority existing on Earth—the *original* Bible texts were lost

The more \_\_\_\_\_ a man has the closer he can be with God

Only intelligentsia can educate commoners about what the *original* languages really mean

The best of the world’s wisdom is to be *added* to biblical truth to make it acceptable

- As a result of what they believed during this period of church history...

They left their first love and stopped doing the first works

c. There is hope

- The prescription:

Beware – Be constantly aware of what can happen to our church and ourselves

Be ready – to repent; to always have a right heart \_\_\_\_\_ toward the written word (the Bible) and the living Word (Jesus Christ)

Do what the Bible says and do not ever replace it with seemingly other good things

NEXT WEEK: The Smyrna Letter