

Daniel and Revelation Series

Sermon 3

Ephesus

Prayer

Text Rev 2:1-7

Recap on last talks:

1. Importance of remembering that John was a man of his own time, and wrote from his own culture and faith. 95% of Rev alludes to the OT and NT – the echoes. This helps us understand the book in its historical context.
2. In understanding the book we must let Scripture interpret Scripture. In that context we saw, last time, two symbols interpreted for us. In 1:20 we saw that the seven stars are seven angels, and the seven lampstands are seven churches. That means that should we run into stars or lampstands again, we will know what they represent.
3. The seven sections of the book divided by sanctuary scenes in heaven.
4. The 7 churches are the subject of the first of John's looks into the heavenly temple.

Now let's look at the first church, Ephesus: (read [2:1-7](#)).

The question is; how shall we go about understanding this?

Was this just referring to the local church in Ephesus? Or does it have some symbolic meaning? In answer to this we may refer back to [1:19](#) (read). Obviously then, Jesus intended that this Book help us understand the past, the present and the future.

I believe Jesus put that verse in for a good reason. There is some interesting history associated with the interpretation of the books of Daniel and the Revelation. Traditionally, Bible students understood them in what is termed the Historicist context; that is to say they understood the events of these books to cover the entire course of history from the apostolic period right through to the second advent of Christ. This was in harmony with [1:19](#).

With this understanding, the church at Ephesus represents the apostolic church. The next church, Smyrna represents the next time period, and so on until the last church, Laodicea, which represents the church of the last days when Christ returns.

The Reformers, Luther, Knox, Calvin and others understood the Bible in this sense, and as a result saw that the beasts of Daniel and Revelation represented the very powers that were persecuting them, namely their own Church. When they read of the Antichrist, they understood him to be of their day, and obviously, none other than the head of the established church of their day.

The Church, therefore, found it necessary to reinterpret these books to mean something else, and as a result, two Jesuit scholars, by the names of Fernand(?) Ribera, and Louis d'Alcazar developed two alternative methods of interpreting the books of Daniel and the Revelation. These two methods became known as the Futurist and the Preterist interpretations.

The Futurist interpretation placed all the events of these books way down in the future. Thus nothing in these books refers to us; they all refer to the events surrounding the return of Christ in some far distant future. Therefore with the futurist interpretation the Antichrist has not come yet and will not at any time that need concern us. Not many people today accept this explanation.

The Preterist interpretation, on the other hand, placed everything back in the days of the Roman Empire and before. Therefore the books have no relevance at all today. Therefore the Antichrist is simply a figure of long ago who is long dead. In fact, in this theory, the Antichrist was understood to be a Roman General by the name of Antiochus IV Epiphanes who was particularly troublesome to the Jews about 165 years before Christ.

This view is still widely accepted today. For example, this study Bible has the following notes on [Daniel 8:9](#) which refers to the little horn which tramples on God's people: "The horn that started small is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who during the last few years of his reign made a determined effort to destroy the Jewish faith."

But remember [1:19](#). Jesus said that these words are for the past, the present and the future. For that reason SDAs have always taken the Historicist interpretation to be the correct one. This is the one I believe, and the one I will share with you.

With that in mind let us turn our attention to the first church. Ephesus.

Note that there is a format presented here which is found in each Church. (Let's read each section)

1. ID of the writer.
2. Commendation.
3. Rebuke.
4. Recognition.
5. Admonition.
6. Warning.
7. Promise

	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadel	Laodicea
Identification	7 stars & 7 candles						
Commendation	Perseverance						
Rebuke	Lost first love						
Recognition	Hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans						
Admonition	Repent						
Warning	Will remove lampstand						
Promise	Will give tree of life						

So, assuming the historicist interpretation of this passage, where shall we place it in earth's history? The name 'Ephesus' means 'desirable'. The city of Ephesus was one in which great work had been done by Paul, and Christianity had flourished there. The time period is undoubtedly the apostolic era from the ascension of Christ until approximately the end of the century. This was an age of purity for the church, for the disciples were still alive, and people had a first-hand memory of Christ.

What about the Nicolaitans? Who were they? It appears they were a sect who taught that our moral behaviour need not be governed by our faith. In other words, the Christian, because his sins are forgiven, is free to live a life of immorality. It

appears that this may have been a problem in the apostolic church.

	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERG	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADEL	LAODICEA
Meaning	Desirable						
Dates	33-100 AD						
Era	Apostolic						

What lessons are there for us in this passage?

1. God hates those who claims to follow him, but who live lives inconsistent with faith.
2. Have we lost our first love? Do we no longer enjoy God's Word as we did? Is prayer a chore rather than something we look forward to? If so let us pray that God will give us back our first love. The way we did when we first committed our lives to God.

Next time we will look at the next three churches and follow the course of the Church's history as seen by Jesus Himself.

Let us pray.