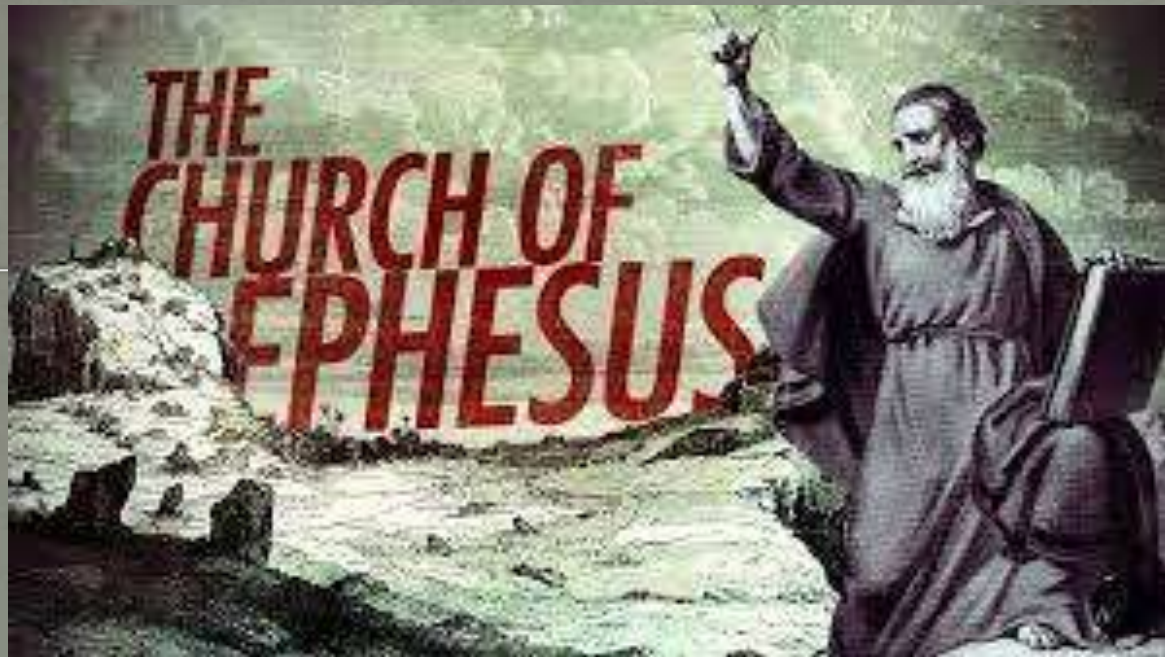
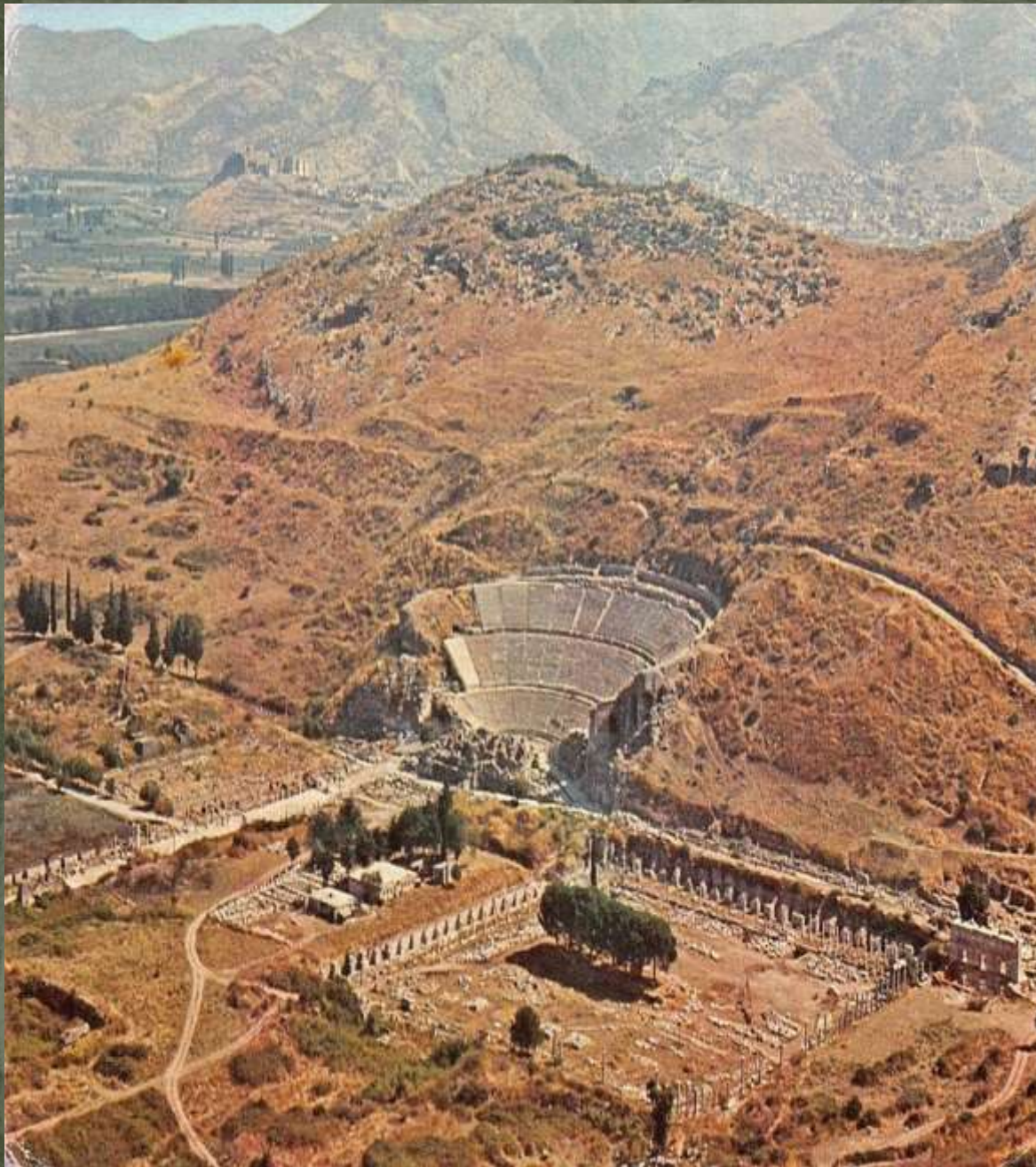


The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

The Letter to



Vv. 1-7



Ephesus

- Foremost city in Asia.
- Nearly 250,000 in population
- Trading center (three routes)
- Home to the Temple of Diana (Artemis)

Ephesus & Religion



Temple was 100 times larger than the Parthenon



Paul left Timothy to pastor the Church of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3; circa 62-63 AD).

The picture is the Grand Boulevard; also called the Way of the Martyrs. During the persecutions of Domitian, thousands were marched to the sea, herded onto ships, taken to Rome, and martyred in the Coliseum.

Who's Speaking? (2:1)

“...He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand...” identifies the One whose Words are to be written, not John's, but the glorified risen Christ, the Lord of the Church!

By His Presence via
The Holy Spirit,
Jesus speaks His
Word to John.



What He Knows (2:2-4)

The Lord is fully aware of what is happening in His churches. He commends their sincerity for the Lord, their steadfastness in the truth, and their testing of all teachings in comparison with Scripture -- this is how you find out who is a false prophet.

This takes a good deal of difficult research and careful thinking, but they have not given up (cf. 1 Jn 4:1-6).

What He Finds Wrong!

V.4: “You have left your first love...” the Ephesians' were zealous about sound doctrine (*Biblical teaching*) out of love for Christ. They knew that false teaching ultimately destroys the life-giving Gospel, but that zeal had now degenerated to simply zeal for sound doctrine. They had forgotten the reason to be filled with zeal for sound doctrine, i.e., their first love, *the Lord Jesus Christ!*

What He Finds Wrong!

There is a progression seen in the congregation which has been seen many times in many churches since. It begins with a very Godly zeal for Christ through protecting sound teaching, which eventually can degenerate into a simple zeal for sound teaching which, legalistically, forgets the Gospel.

This stage then degenerates into a church having merely the outward form of sound teaching (talk...no action). Hence their first love, *Christ*, is missing; even though the outward form and language of Christianity is still present (sound familiar). The tone of Christ's letter does not seem to indicate that the Ephesians' had degenerated past the first step in this downward progression.

He Calls For Repentance (Vv. 5-6)

Repent!

Go back to your first love because otherwise the Word will be entirely lost and you will cease to be a church (I will remove your lamp stand from its place.)

The Lord desires not only hard work, but also our whole heart and being. Sadly, the church in the present day village which was Ephesus is nonexistent. Modern day churches can be wiped out by silting up with the mud of sluggishness, indifference, and layer-on-layer of things which are foreign to the spirit and life of Christianity. (See Matt. 13:3-7.)



The Nicolaitans (v.6)

Followers of Nicolaus who taught that sincere, faithful Christians could openly indulge in pleasures of the flesh and still remain faithful to Christ. Their sect was found in Ephesus and Pergamum.

Nicolaus is unknown, but what is known that this was an antinomian sect which claimed license for sensual sins. According to Eusebius, this sect dissolved quickly¹

¹Ecclesiastical History, 3.29.1

His Promise (v.7)

This is a call for all who read this to pay attention and heed the Lord of the Church.

Note that “churches” is plural. While this message is specifically for the Ephesians, it is also edifying for all churches. After it was read and copied, the letter would be distributed to the other churches. This was a common practice.

“To the one that conquers...” The Christian life is a struggle which can be lost due to apathy! The devil’s strategy...: make it so hard to be Christian that you eventually desire the easier life of non-striving, but still retaining church membership.

PERSECUTED

CHURCH

REVELATION
2:8-11

THE LETTER TO THE
CHURCH IN SMYRNA

SMYRNA AND MODERN-DAY IZMIR



IN JOHN'S
TIME, A CITY OF
200,000

NOTED FOR THE
LARGEST
LIBRARY IN
ASIA MINOR

CENTER OF
IMPERIAL
WORSHIP

VERY LARGE JEWISH POPULATION
WITH A LARGE SYNAGOGUE

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

THE CHURCH BEGAN AS A PRODUCT OF PAUL'S PREACHING AND CONTINUES STRONG EVEN TODAY.

ABOUT HALF OF THE POPULATION IS CONSIDERED CHRISTIAN EVEN THOUGH THE MUSLIMS HAVE DOMINATED THE AREA FOR OVER 1100 YEARS -- A WITNESS OF THE LORD'S BLESSING OF THIS CHURCH FOR WHICH CHRIST HAD ONLY PRAISE IN THIS LETTER IN REVELATION.



WHO'S SPEAKING (V.8)

JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS **"THE FIRST AND THE LAST."** THUS, JESUS IS THE ONE WHO WAS DEAD AND NOW HAS COME BACK TO LIFE (e[zh]sen).

HE IS **THE FIRST AND THE LAST** BECAUSE HE DIED AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

+ HE IS THE FIRST CAUSE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE;

+ HE IS THE LAST, THE GOAL AND OBJECT OF THE ONE'S FAITH AND LIFE SINCE HE IS THE GIVER OF ETERNAL LIFE!



HEBREWS 12:2

WHAT HE KNOWS (V.9)

PERSECUTION FOR THE FAITH HAD ALREADY BEGUN BUT WOULD BE ENDED. IT WAS THE JEWS WHO WOULD STIR UP THE ROMAN AUTHORITIES CLAIMING THAT THE CHRISTIANS WERE AGAINST HUMANITY AND WOULD NOT WORSHIP ANY ROMAN GODS.

THEY CLAIM TO BE JEWS, BUT ARE NOT, FOR BEING A DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM IS A SPIRITUAL AND NOT A BIOLOGICAL CONDITION (CF. MATT 3:9; ROM 9:6-8; GAL 3:26-29). IN REALITY THOSE WHO REJECT THE PROMISE IN CHRIST, NO MATTER THEIR FOREFATHERS, ARE THE CHILDREN OF SATAN AND GO TO HIS SYNAGOGUE (JOHN 8:39-47). ONE OF SATAN'S MOST EFFECT TACTICS IS TO WORK UNDER THE GUISE OF RELIGION.

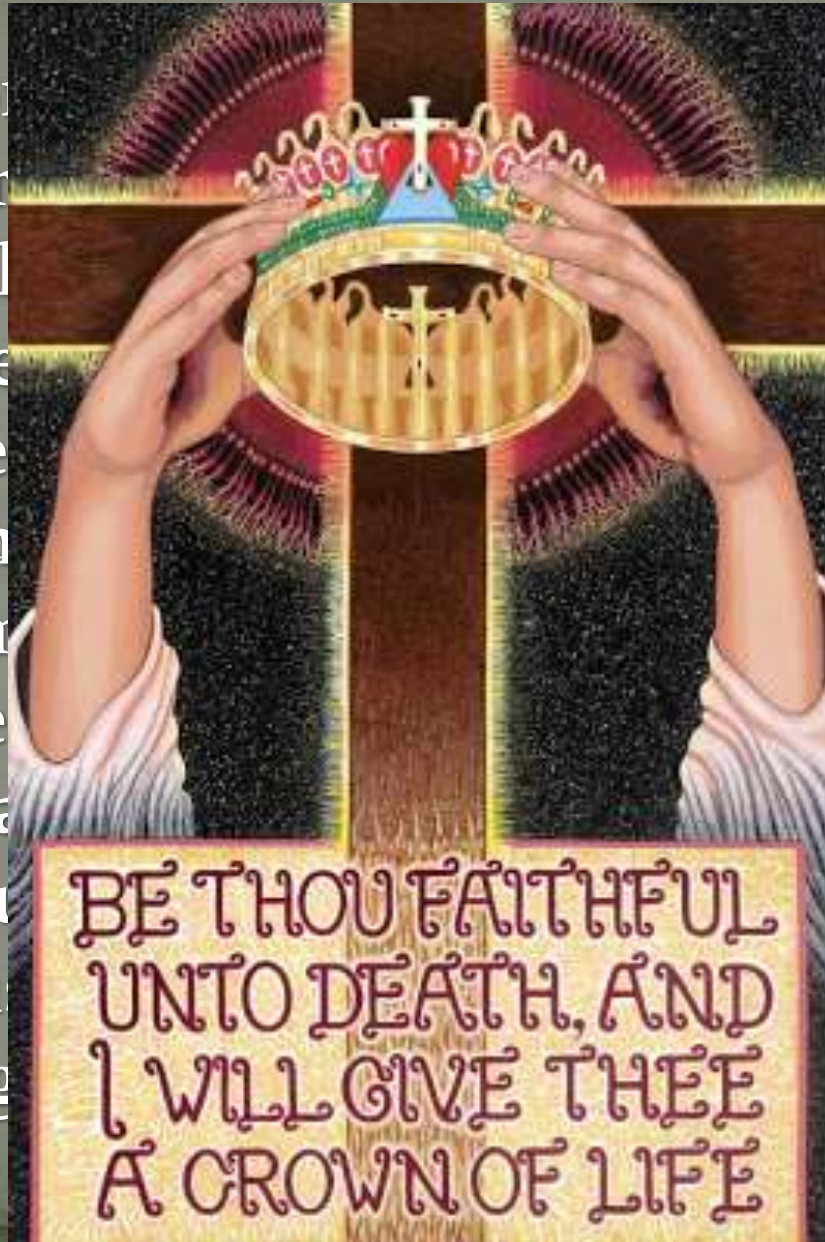
What He Knows (v.9)

Poverty: Most often the first Christians were lower, poorer classes. So their eyes were not filled with worldly things. The well-to-do are usually too distracted by the possibility of worldly gain, busy schedules in pursuit of what this life has to offer, and other such things.

But those Christians at Smyrna are rich in that they have allowed no false doctrine or ways to prosper in their midst.

Comfort, Exhortation, Promise (10-11)

A word of comfort
seen the worst
tested -- in the
Christ will reward
are not the end
belong to Christ
10 days: a time
of the figure
not 10 days, a
speaking (Revelation)
this phrase is
the suffering



has already
which would be
were truly in
. Their deaths
Those who truly
in all things.
a symbolic use
on being time,
figuratively
implication of
has been set to
ng begins.

Comfort, Exhortation, Promise (10-11)

V. 11: *Second death* -- eternal death. We are born into this life physically alive, but spiritually dead. At your Baptism, faith in Jesus Christ is given as a gift as is spiritual life, and therefore you have a second life. When your life on earth ends; spiritual life continues.

However, the one who is spiritually dead, and then dies physically bears both spiritual and physical death -- *a second death*.

Comfort, Exhortation, Promise (10-11)

He who overcomes, i.e. perseveres in the faith, will not lose their spiritual life, even if they lose their physical life. The implied warning is that those of the household of faith who do not persevere in the faith -- they either give up the faith, or lose it out of neglect -- will be subject to the second or eternal death.

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