

SALVATION IN SYMBOLS & SIGNS



Corresponds to Program 7



EPHESUS - THE LOVE FLAME STUDY GUIDE

The seven churches are not only churches located in the cities of John's day, but they also represent the church in all ages from Pentecost to the second coming. The church of John's day was Ephesus. The historical period represented by the Ephesus church is from the time of Christ about AD 31 to about AD 100.

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1-7 NKJV

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

In the first three verses, we get a beautiful picture of the grace and mercy of Jesus toward His people. Here we see Him affirming all that they are doing that is good, and He commends them. He says: "I know your works." Then in

verse four, He begins to bring out the things that are going on that He is not so pleased about.

It appears as though they have become so caught up in daily affairs, personally and in the church, that Jesus is getting left out. They have ceased putting Jesus first, and seem to be doing good works out of a sense of duty and obligation, rather than out of love for Him. They are not without good works, but it appears as though they have become self righteous, using their works to commend themselves to God. Jesus cannot accept this. Unless they repent, they are in danger of letting their light go out, and being cut off from the eternal home and the tree of life. In His mercy, Jesus calls for them to repent.



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Jesus Among the Candlesticks

There are two things to note as we continue:

1. Prior to this message Jesus is pictured by John among the 7 candlesticks or churches (Revelation 1:20).

There are two churches of the seven that have no rebuke, Smyrna and Philadelphia, yet Jesus pictures Himself among all seven churches. He does not separate the two from the other five.

2. Jesus presents His warning with affirmation for what we are doing well and forgiveness, grace and love for where we are failing.

We see Jesus doing this in John 4 with the Samaritan woman who He met at the well. He offered her the water of

KEY SCRIPTURES

Revelation 2:1-7 CHURCH IN EPHESUS

Revelation 1:20 JESUS AMONG CANDLESTICKS

John 4:10 JESUS GIVES LIVING WATER

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 LOVE IS LIKE A FIRE THAT CANNOT BE QUENCHED

life, told her that He was Messiah and then opened up her life history. His love and acceptance led her to run to tell her village about this Man who must be the Messiah because He knew all she had ever done wrong and yet offered her salvation.

Again we see how lovingly Jesus rebukes His disciples in Matthew 26. While He foretells the terrible abandonment of His disciples, He promises them that He will go before them to Galilee.

They will forsake Him, but He will not forsake them (Matthew 26:31-32). Before the denial they have the assurance of forgiveness. Jesus deals with us today as He did with His erring disciples when He was with them. He saturates His rebukes in affirmation, assurance of forgiveness, sympathy and love.

This same truth is illustrated in the priestly garments worn by Christ. According to Exodus 28:4 on these garments was a breastplate containing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel signifying that Christ bears His people on His heart.

Losing our First Love

The long list of their works is very likely one of the reasons why this church is in danger of losing its first love for Christ. Often, “the greatest competitor of our love for Jesus is our service for Jesus.” (Oswald Chambers).

The first temptation brought to Eve in Eden was to gain the knowledge of good and evil so that she could be like God and therefore no longer depend on God, but become self-dependent. The connection between this first church and Eden is found in the promise to Ephesus, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” Revelation 2:7.

We lose our first love and think we can be like God by our works and therefore no longer depend on God. This is the spirit of antichrist or putting self works in the place of Christ. John heard, saw, and handled the love, forgiveness, light and joy of the Word of life. He walked in fellowship with God and longed for others to experience the love and joy of Jesus. This motivated and qualified him to identify the antichrist (1 John 1).

John identified an antichrist that is a singular power or individual as “the antichrist.” In addition to “the antichrist” John also identified “many antichrists.” Therefore antichrist is not just a singular person or power but is also a spirit or experience that is held by “many” individual people who put their works in the place of Christ’s love (1 John 2:18).

John warned that if you turn away from Jesus and lose your first love you personally individually take on the spirit of antichrist (1 John 2:22).

The Love Flame

In the Song of Solomon love is like a fire that cannot be quenched (Song of Solomon 8:6-7). In Matthew 25 the love of the Holy Spirit is like oil that keeps our love flame burning brightly for Jesus (Matthew 25:1-9).

Paul in his Epistles also spoke to 7 churches in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossia, and Thessalonica. In all of these letters he warned of dangers facing the church. And in all of them, like the letters to the churches in Revelation, he pointed the believers to Jesus, our first love, as the remedy for every failure and sin. Jesus was the solution then and Jesus is the solution now. ★

Personal Application

Is it your desire to see that your love for Jesus as you labor for Him will not go out? _____

