

The Seven Churches - Part I

Ephesus and Smyrna

2:1-11

Introductory Notes

- These are messages from Christ to literal churches that existed as John wrote.
- There is a general consensus in Church tradition that John ministered in Ephesus during his latter years. It is therefore almost certain that he would have connections to all of these churches.
- Just as we glean instruction from Paul's letters to churches in Ephesus or Corinth, we can learn from these churches' strengths and weaknesses.
- Some claim that these churches are examples of seven time periods in Church History, culminating in Christ's second coming.
 - I personally doubt this to be true, but I will include the information because many accept it and I don't feel that it is a major issue.
- Basic structure of each message:
 - Description of Christ
 - Commendation
 - Condemnation and Warning
 - Exhortation and Promise

Outline

- Message to Church of Ephesus - 2:1-7
- Message to Church of Smyrna - 2:8-11

Notes on the Message to Ephesus

- Ephesus was the principal city of the region. It featured the legendary Temple of Artemis (or Diana). Paul ministered here in Acts 19, wrote an epistle to them (Ephesians, *duh*), and John himself ministered there in his latter years.
- Description of Christ - vs. 1
 - Christ is described as active in the churches - note *holding* and *walking*
- Commendation - vs. 2-3,6
 - This church is very active - they work, labor, possess patience, test false prophets
 - Nicolaitans - we are unsure today exactly who these heretics are
 - I think the name (translates roughly to "conquerors of people") suggests that this was an early attempt to build an ecclesiastical hierarchy.
- Condemnation and Warning - vs. 4-5
 - They left their "first love" - undoubtedly Christ.
 - "remove thy candlestick" - No Christ, no church.
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 7
- Church period possibly described - Pentecost to A.D. 100.
- Application for today: Being busy for Christ is not the same as loving Christ.

Notes on the Message to Smyrna

- Smyrna - situated on a harbor and known for its natural beauty.
- Description of Christ - vs. 8
 - Christ is described as eternal.
- Commendation - vs. 9
 - Problems faced: tribulation (trouble or suffering), poverty, false believers
- Condemnation and Warning
 - There is no condemnation for the church of Smyrna.
 - Persecution purifies the church just as fire refines metal.
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 10-11
 - There is little positive to say about the troubles this church will face except that they will survive and receive blessings on the other side.
- Church period possibly described - A.D. 100 - 313 (Constantine's legalization of Christianity.)
- Application for Today: Be faithful in the face of persecution.