

CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH OF PENNSYLVANIA [Mount of Redemption]

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BIBLE STUDY

COURSE OUTLINE: REVELATION 2 v 1-11

February 15th, 2012

NEXT WEEK: REVELATION 2 v 12-29

COURSE TITLE: CHRIST'S MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS [THE LOVELESS CHURCH]

2:1 Ephesus was the capital city of Asia Minor, a center of land and sea trade. Ephesus along with Alexandria and Antioch in Syria, are the three most influential cities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. The most famous temple of the *goddess – Artemis [Diana] one of the ancient wonders of the world [Acts 19 v 23]*, was located in this city. Ephesus was also *John's headquarters before his exile to the Island of Patmos by the Roman Emperor – Domitian at about A.D. 95.*

Ephesus served as the *“mother church”* to the other churches, all of which are connected by the same Roman need. The church at Ephesus was commended by Christ because of its soundness of faith, most especially, in resisting *false teachers who came and caused problems in this notable church.*

The one who *“holdeth the seven stars in His right hand” [messengers/angels of the church]* and walks in the midst of *“seven golden lamp stands” [the seven churches]* is Jesus Christ [Rev. 1 v 11-13]. These descriptions cannot go for anyone else except the *Head and owner of the church* – our Lord Jesus Christ [Matt. 16 v 18 and Rev. 1 v 4-5]. Christ has power and authority over His churches and their leaders/ministers. He holds the church firmly in His right hand [Heb. 10 v 12, 12 v 2].

Ephesus church had become a *large proud church, but Jesus message reminded them that He alone is the head of the body of believers.* This lesson serves to remind us as a church that *Christ indeed cares for our church – Christ Apostolic Church of Pennsylvania [Mount of Redemption].* The Lord of the universe knew every church and its precise situation. Just as Jesus cared for each of these churches, *He cares for our own church as well. He wants our church to reach its greatest potential.* Let us take our church seriously, God does.

2:2 Over a long period of time, the church at Ephesus had steadfastly refused *to tolerate sin among its members.* However, this was not easy in a city noted for *immoral sexuality practices associated with the worship of Diana – the fertility goddess [Acts 19 v 28].*

The lesson derived here is a message to our church as well. We are living in the *times of widespread sin and sexual immorality.* It is popular to be open minded toward many types of sin, calling them *personal choices or alternative lifestyles.* However, we need to be reminded that the owner – Jesus walks in the middle or center of His church. *Nothing escapes His sight no matter how hidden to the human eye.*

We, as a church, also need to be informed that when the body of believers begins to tolerate sin in the church, it is **lowering the standards and compromising the gospel**. Let us be reassured that God's observations are faultless. **His approval is infinitely more important than the worlds.**

2:3 Christ commended the church at Ephesus for 1] working hard 2] having patience 3] resisting sin 4] critically examining the claims of false apostles [false teachings and false doctrines and 5] enduring hardship without becoming weary. **Every church should have these characteristics**. However, these good qualities should spring up from our love for Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Both Jesus and John stressed **love for one another as an authentic proof of the gospel [John 13 v 34, 1John 3 v 18-19]**.

The lesson derived in this verse implies that in the battle to maintain **sound teaching, moral and doctrinal purity in a church**, one may face series of persecution or prolonged conflict, but one thing is certain. **The owner of the church – Christ Jesus, is watching. His judgment is unbiased and would not leave his ministers undefended for the sake of the gospel.**

2:4 Christ had a complaint against this church. He pointed out unto them what ordinary eyes could not see – **good looks with wrong attitude; good works with no passion or fervency and good works with wrong motives**. They had abandoned the first love – Jesus Christ. Jesus then asked them to recall the relationship they once had with him, to take inventory of their lives, and to turn from the things of the world and back to Him.

Paul had once commended the church at Ephesus for its love for God and others [Eph. 1 v 15], but at this point in time the church and members were backsliding. **Jesus warned them to stop their acts of backsliding or else they would lose their right to exist as a church**. Individuals and churches easily get to this level which only **the spirit of Jehovah could see and point out [Jer. 2 v 1-5]**.

The point inherent in this passage should be of paramount concern to us all. As believers, we should always be aware of the **danger of drifting away from Jesus. We need to find more time for prayer and study, and allow the Holy Spirit to show unto us how Christ Jesus – the owner assesses us [Ps. 139 v 1-12, 2Cor. 13 v 5]**.

2:5 The Ephesian church which was once commended for love [Eph. 1 v 15-16] is now asked to reexamine themselves and change [repent] from their wrong behaviors unto Christ. If they do not repent, Jesus threatened that He would **“remove their candlesticks from its place”** which literally means that the church would cease to be an effective church. Just as the seven-branched candlesticks in the temple gave light to their surrounding communities, **the churches now were to give light to their surrounding communities**. However, Jesus warned them that their lights would go off if they chose not to repent.

This is another moment for us as individuals and as a church to reexamine ourselves, repent of our sins and rededicate our lives unto Christ. In fact, Jesus Himself would extinguish any light that did not fulfill its purpose or mission. **THE CHOICE IS YOURS.**

2:6 Jesus gave another unique credit to the church at Ephesus. *They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which Jesus also hate.* The Nicolaitans were believers who compromised their faith in order to enjoy some of the sinful practices of the Ephesians society. This sect attempts to use Christian liberty as an excuse *for self-indulgence, moral perversion and looseness.* Apparently their teachings and practices were immoral perhaps even idolatry [Rev. 1 v 14-15].

Through John, Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for *hating the wicked practices of the Nicolaitans.* It is necessary for us to understand that the Ephesian church *did not hate the people [Nicolaitans] but they hated their sinful acts.* As believers and a church of Christ, we should accept and love all people, ***BUT WE MUST REFUSE TO TOLERATE EVIL AND SIN.***

God cannot tolerate sin, and He expects us, as Christians to stand against it. The world needs genuine Christians who will stand for God's truth and point people towards right living.

Another important lesson in this context is easily explainable: *When we want to take part in an activity that we know is wrong, we may make excuses to justify our behaviors, saying that the sin committed is not as bad as it seems or that it will not hurt our faith. However, we need to REMEMBER NOW AND ALWAYS THAT:* Christ has strong words for those who look for excuses to sin.

2:7 Although this letter was specifically addressed to the church in Ephesus, the last line [unto the churches] is addressed to anyone who will listen. Jesus also had an encouragement and blessing for those who over come. Christ promises to give *over comers the opportunity to eat from the tree of life.* Apparently, there must be something on that tree that would cause a person who ate from that tree to live forever.

To overcome is to *be victorious by believing in Christ, persevering, remaining faithful and living as one who follows Christ. Such a life brings great rewards [Rev. 21 v 7] and should be the paramount focus of any believer.*

The lesson derived is that *believers should have inner ears to hear when God speaks.* Some people are dull [slow] at hearing while some hear without understanding [Is. 6 v 9, Matt. 13 v 14 and Heb. 5 v 11]. *With proper hearing and obedience, the paradise that was once lost would be regained in Jesus precious name, Amen [Rev. 2 v 7].*

2:8 Jesus commenced his writings in verse 8 to *the church at Smyrna [also known as the persecuted church].* As this church was experiencing great persecution, Jesus began by reminding them that He *is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega.* He assured them that He is the one who created all things, and the one who will end all things.

Smyrna was an important seaport 50 miles north of Ephesus. The presence of a *Roman imperial cult and a large Jewish population made life extremely difficult for believers in Smyrna. However, the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two out of the seven churches in Asia that were not rebuked by Christ in some way.*

This lesson derived is an assurance to us all that ***just like this church [Smyrna], Jesus was also persecuted***. Christ's enemies falsely accused Him, beat Him, spat on Him, ripped out His beard, crowned Him with thorns and nailed Him to a cross where ***He died but resurrected on the third day. Halleluiah! Praise be unto the Lord.***

Hence, if an Antichrist or the enemies of the gospel are persecuting you and trying to kill you because of your ***stand or non compromise for the gospel, remain faithful and do not be afraid***. Remember that Jesus always existed, that Jesus never ceased to exist, that Jesus died and ***Jesus triumphed when He rose from the dead, HALLELUYAH!***

2:9 Jesus – the owner of His churches continued with His perfect and unbiased assessments by commending this church. This church [persecuted church] has been ravaged by persecution leading to indescribable loss of lives and properties, and was ***therefore apparently poor. Yet Jesus says it is a rich church***. Rich in what? We may ask; but the Lord Jesus said that the church was rich ***in works of love and faith and uncompromising stands for the gospel of Christ*** despite the loss of several people including many martyrs like ***Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna***.

Christ went on with His writings with some words of consolation unto this noble church. God, the owner of His church also recognized the ***blasphemy of fake brethren who called themselves Jews***. They even call their place of worship Synagogue – inferring ***that it was a Synagogue of the Lord***. However Jesus called them ***“Synagogue of Satan”***.

Even today, some ***religious pretenders called themselves members of God's church but***, Jesus knows that they are real members of Satan's church. The lesson derived is that ***it does not matter what we call ourselves, the truth is that the owner – Jesus knows His sheep [John 10 v 14]***. Hypocrisy and hypocrites have not just begun. Sometimes they masquerade themselves as light but they are agents of darkness. ***The owner [Jesus] recognizes them all. Who are you?***

2:10 The believers of Smyrna were undergoing persecution and had been reduced to poverty. Yet they were on their toes for their beliefs and uncompromising stands.

The church suffered most among the churches in the hands of ***the unusually wicked Roman Emperors and the hostile Jewish communities***. Strengthened by persecution and hostility, ***Jesus had nothing against her except to prepare her for more intense and unavoidable persecution and tribulation***. They were encouraged to endure suffering faithfully as their persecution will be for a short duration [ten days]. They were also encouraged to press towards the mark ***for the crown of life as they would become over comers [Rev. 2 v 7]***. As believers, we are not supposed to be cheap and super comfortable Christians, we are rather to be well equipped as soldiers of the living God [2Tim. 2 v 1-13].

2:11 Again like He did in His closing remark to the church at Ephesus, Jesus also encouraged the church at Smyrna and every believer to ***have hearing ears. Hearers and does will overcome and would receive victory over the second death***. The Master/Owner of the church would not leave His church alone as it passes through the toughest of fire [Is. 43 v 1]. Whatever we are passing through is no match for Him [Romans 8 v 18]. ***Jesus always has a crown that is better worn than imagined for every cross that***

comes our ways. Let us as a church and a believer hold unto His standards and live by His views, assessments and instructions.

The church needs constant reminder from the owner of the church *from His word and His spirit. ARE WE LISTENING?*

NB: Bible Study is on Wednesday's, from 7pm-9pm. Remain blessed as you come in Jesus Name.