



SAVED TO SERVE

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THE SEVEN CHURCHES: EPHESUS

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will begin a series studying the seven churches of Revelation. We will focus on the church of Ephesus and find out how its message applies to us today.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." {AA 585.3}

2. How can we prove that the messages to the seven churches extend until the Second Coming of Christ? Revelation 1:1-3; 7-8 (Also note that the number 7 represents completion - Genesis 2:2, 3).

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3. What is the name of the first church John writes to in Revelation 2:1? What does it mean? _____

"The first church named is Ephesus. According to the application here made, this would cover the first, or apostolic age of the church. The definition of the word Ephesus, is desirable, which may well be taken as a good descriptive term of the character and condition of the church in its first state. Those early Christians had received the doctrine of Christ in its purity. They enjoyed the benefits and blessings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were noted for works, labor, and patience. In faithfulness to the pure principles taught by Christ, they could not bear those that were evil, and they tried false apostles, searched out their true characters, and found them liars. That this work was specially done by the literal and particular church at Ephesus more than by other churches of that time, we have no evidence; there is nothing said about it by Paul in the epistle he wrote to that church; but it was done by the Christian church as a whole, in that age, and was a most appropriate work at that time. (See Acts 15; 2 Corinthians 11:13.)" {1897 UrS, DAR 375.1}

4. The message to Ephesus is written to the angel of the church. What does an angel represent in the Bible? Galatians 4:14; Acts 6:8, 15; Psalm 103:20, 21

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5. Primarily, the seven stars point to the angels of the seven churches (Revelation 1:20). What else do these stars represent? Genesis 22:17; 37:9-10

"These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand." Revelation 2:1. **These words are spoken to the teachers in the church**--those entrusted by God with weighty responsibilities. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with God's ministers, who are to reveal the love of Christ. The stars of heaven are under His control. He fills them with light. He guides and directs their movements. If He did not do this, they would become fallen stars. **So with His ministers. They are but instruments in His hands, and all the good they accomplish is done through His power.** Through them His light is to shine forth. The Saviour is to be their efficiency. If they will look to Him as He looked to the Father they will be enabled to do His work. **As they make God their dependence, He will give them His brightness to reflect to the world.**" {AA 586.3}

6. What do the seven golden candlesticks represent? Revelation 1:20 _____

7. What time period does the church of Ephesus cover in history? Revelation 2:1; 1:13, 17, 18 _____

"The time covered by this first church, may be considered the period from the resurrection of Christ, to the close of the first century, or to the death of the last of the apostles." {1897 UrS, DAR 351.2}

8. Note: Revelation 2:1 is showing us that Jesus is giving a message to the leaders and church members in the time period of Ephesus, and He assures them that He is the one who is upholding them and abiding in their presence. Just to reiterate, the message to ALL of the seven churches are applicable to us today.

9. Read Revelation 2:2. What works and labors did the Christians of the first church perform? Acts 9:36-40; 20:20; Colossians 1:27-29

10. Read Revelation 2:2 again. Who were examples of false apostles and liars during the time period of Ephesus?

a) Acts 5:1-10

"But God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. **Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their dealing with God: they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment...**" {AA 72.2}

b) Acts 8:8-23

"**Simon Magus was baptized, but he thought that the Holy Ghost could be purchased with money.** He offered the disciples money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." But with holy indignation Peter answered, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." [Acts 8:19-23.] {12Lts, Lt 48, 1897, par. 14}

c) Acts 19:11-20

"But the One to whom all the spirits of evil are subject and who had given His servants authority over them, was about to bring still greater shame and defeat upon those who despised and profaned His holy name. Sorcery had been prohibited by the Mosaic law, on pain of death, yet from time to time it had been secretly practiced by apostate Jews. At the time of Paul's visit to Ephesus there were in the city "certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists," who, seeing the wonders wrought by him, "took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus." **An attempt was made by "seven sons of one Sceva,** a Jew, and chief of the priests." Finding a man possessed with a demon, they addressed him, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But "the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." {AA 287.1}

"Thus unmistakable proof was given of the sacredness of the name of Christ, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it without faith in the divinity of the Saviour's mission." "Fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified." {AA 288.1}

"...How was it with the early church? Ananias and Sapphira joined themselves to the disciples. Simon Magus was baptized. Demas, who forsook Paul, had been counted a believer. Judas Iscariot was numbered with the apostles. The Redeemer does not want to lose one soul; His experience with Judas is recorded to show His long patience with perverse human nature; and He bids us bear with it as He has borne. He has said that false brethren will be found in the church till the close of time." {COL 72.3}

11. What commendation was given to the church of Ephesus in Revelation 2:3? 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Galatians 6:9

12. What reproof did Jesus give to Ephesus? Revelation 2:4; 1 John 2:15, 16

"The Lord Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, plainly stated that "**because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.**" He speaks of a class who have fallen from a high state of spirituality. Let such utterances as these come home with solemn, searching power to our hearts. Where is the fervor, the devotion to God, that corresponds to the greatness of the truth which we claim to believe? **The love of the world, the love of some darling sin, has weaned the heart from the love of prayer and of meditation on sacred things.** A formal round of religious services is kept up; but where is the love of Jesus? Spirituality is dying. Is this torpor, this mournful deterioration, to be perpetuated? Is the lamp of truth to flicker and go out in darkness because it is not replenished by the oil of grace?" {5T 538.2}

13. Based on scripture, who is our first love? 1 John 4:10, 19

14. Does the reproof to Ephesus only apply to those whose lives outwardly show that they are in a backslidden condition? Matthew 25:5; 1 Corinthians 10:12

15. What is God's admonition and warning to His church? Revelation 2:5

16. Note: The account of Mary and Joseph in Jerusalem is a perfect example of the message to Ephesus and it gives practical lessons for our lives today.

17. Who did Mary and Joseph forget when they were leaving the passover at Jerusalem? Luke 2:41-43

18. Approximately how many days did it take to find Jesus since they last saw him? Luke 2:44-46 _____

19. Note: Many times in our lives we go about our day without Jesus. We neglect devotion, secret prayer, or choose to encounter the day relying on our own strength and wisdom to be successful and happy. But all too often we find that we are no match for the tempter or the trials of life. Like Mary and Joseph, we have to repent (turn in the opposite direction) and do the first works of salvation that we did when we first came to Christ in order to reconnect with Him.

"When temptations assail you, as they surely will, when care and perplexity surround you, when, distressed and discouraged, you are almost ready to yield to despair, look, O look, to where with the eye of faith you last saw the light; and the darkness that encompasseth you will be dispelled by the bright shining of His glory. When sin struggles for the mastery in your soul, and burdens the conscience, when unbelief clouds the mind, go to the Saviour. His grace is sufficient to subdue sin. He will pardon us, making us joyful in God." {RH October 1, 1908, par. 5}

20. When we lose sight of Jesus in our daily experiences, who goes after us and gives us the desire to repent, as clearly seen in the experience of Adam and Eve? Genesis 3:8, 9; Luke 15:4 with John 10:11; Romans 2:4

21. Who were the Nicolaitans, and what were their deeds? Revelation 2:6; 3:14-15 see statement below

"The Nicolaitanes, referred to in verse six, are said by Mosheim to have been a branch of the Gnostics, a sect living in Asia, who denied the divinity of Christ, and "boasted of their being able to restore to mankind the knowledge of the true and Supreme Being." Their belief concerning the creation of the world, conflicted with the writings of Moses, and led to a denial of the divine authority of the Old Testament. Still other beliefs, contrary to the teachings of Christ, the result of a mixture of Greek and Oriental philosophy, led to practices which the church of Christ could not tolerate. He does not say they hated the presence of the Nicolaitanes, and could not endure them; but that they hated their deeds, "which I also hate." This church was in a position where they could hate the sin, and not the sinner, where they could have patience, and labor long for the erring, and love them; while they hated the deeds that separated them from the Lord..." {SSP 46.2}

22. What does Jesus mean when He says, "he that hath an ear, let him hear?" Isaiah 50:4, 5

23. What is the promise for those who overcome sin and the spiritual condition of leaving their first love? Revelation 2:7; 22:2

24. How can we overcome and maintain this victory? John 1:29; Isaiah 50:4 _____

25. As we close, meditate on the words of the hymn, *At The Cross*.

*1 Alas, and did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For sinners such as I?*

Chorus:

*At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!*

2 Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree![Chorus]

3 Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut His glories in
When Christ, the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin.[Chorus]

4 Thus might I hide my blushing face
While Calv'ry's cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt mine eyes to tears.[Chorus]

5 But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do.[Chorus]