


In our last study from Revelation chapter 1, we saw that the entire book of Revelation can be outlined with three main headings. These three headings can be found in  Revelation 1:9. Write them below.

1. The things _____


The things which John had already seen refers to his vision of Jesus Christ in chapter 1.

2. The things _____

This section is found in chapter 2-3 and features seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor.

3. The things _____

The remainder of the book of Revelation can be classified under this heading. Chapters 4-22 are all future events.


In this study we will be examining a letter from Jesus Christ to one of the seven churches of Asia Minor. Read  Rev 2:1-7.


The City

Q. According to verse 1, which church is Christ addressing?

Ephesus was an ancient Greek city on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). It was a large port city and featured one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World – the Temple of Diana.

It's Pagan Culture

 Acts 19:13-20. **Q.** After seeing the events described in v13-16, many Ephesians believed in Jesus Christ. According to v19, what did they do after they became Christians?

 Acts 19:21-41. **Q.** In this passage we read about a man named Demetrius who caused an uproar in Ephesus. What was his occupation?

8. How might a Christian's love for Christ grow cold?
9. What three things can we do to keep our love for Christ fresh?
10. How should Christ's love for us cause us to respond to Him?

was not wanting for godly teachers and examples. The influence of these men and women is clearly seen as Christ offers the church much commendation.

The Commendation

📖 Rev 2:2-3. **Q.** Here Jesus Christ commends the Ephesian church. What five things does he mention in verse 2?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Their Work and Labor

Remember in chapter 1, John saw Jesus' eyes "as a flame of fire". This speaks of the searching and scrutinizing manner in which he sees the church. He knows all there is to know about every church and here he reminds the Ephesians that he "knows their works".

We can't know exactly what these works were. But since Christ commended them, we can look into the New Testament and safely assume that the Ephesians were successfully fulfilling some of the most basic responsibilities of a healthy church.

📖 Matt 28:18. **Q.** What did Jesus tell the church to do?

📖 James 1:27. **Q.** According to James, what is "pure religion"?

It is very likely that the Ephesian church was busy at the task of evangelizing, baptizing, discipling, caring for widows and orphans and remaining separated from the world. These are the basic responsibilities of the church.

Jesus not only said that he knew their "work" but also their "labour". This indicates that whatever they were doing they were doing with fervor. The Ephesians were not half-hearted in their labour. They were diligent and thorough. They worked for Christ even to the point of sweat and exhaustion. This is a great example for all churches. (1 Cor 15:58)

character and his nature. This clearer view of Jesus Christ will help you to respond to Him more intelligently and affectionately.

Learn More About What He Has Done

📖 **Read** Eph 3:14-19. In these verses Paul is expressing his prayer for the Ephesians. His desire is that they would understand the “breadth, length, depth, and height” of God’s love. He desired that they would understand the “love of Christ” which “passes understanding”. What is the wonderful consequence of this knowledge? That they would be “filled with all the fullness of God”.

📖 1 John 4:19. **Q.** According to this verse, Why do we love God?

When we develop a better understanding of who Jesus is, how much he loved us, and what he has done for us, we will doubtless love him better. Our prayer should match the prayer of Paul – “God help me to understand the depths of your love, so that I can love you more”.

Learn More About How We Should Respond To Him

As we grow in our knowledge of who Jesus is, and what He has done for us, we will grow in our love for Him. This deeper love will compel us to respond to him with a sacrificial spirit.

📖 Rom 12:1. **Q.** What should we present to God in response to the mercies he has shown us?

📖 2 Cor 5:14-15. **Q.** What should Christ’s love for us provoke us to do?

Conclusion

It has been said “Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship”. That is a very true saying. Our Christian lives are all about our relationship with Jesus Christ. Like all relationships, if we do not continually nurture our affections and fuel our love, we can grow cold and loveless. The faithful reading of God’s word, daily prayer, meditation on who He is and on what He has done for us will help us to keep our love fresh.

Remember, service and sacrifice are no substitutes for love. The Ephesian church was a laboring church but they failed to be a loving

remain pure from sin and doctrinal error (Col 2:8; Heb 13:9; Eph 4:14; Titus 3:9-11).

The Corinthian church was not as diligent in protecting themselves from sin:

📖 1 Cor 5:1-13. **Q.** According to v1, what sin were the Corinthians tolerating?

Q. v2,5,7,13. What was Paul’s desire for this sinning brother?

Q. v10-11. What did Paul tell the church they should “not do” with the sinning brother?

Protecting the church from sin sometimes requires making tough decisions. Including the exercise of *church discipline* when necessary (Matt 18:15-20). When a believer becomes a member of a local church he submits himself to the authority of church leadership and the accountability of fellow believers (Heb 13:17; 1 Cor 16:15-16). If he continues in sin, not heeding the intervention of the church, he is to be removed from the congregation (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:5). This is difficult to do. Especially since the sinning brother most likely has existing relationships in the church. Nevertheless, Christ’s concern is for the purity of his church (Eph 5:25-27).

Paul told the Ephesians in Eph 4:27, “Neither give place to the devil”. They took this admonition seriously. They exercised church discipline when necessary, and Christ commended them for it.

Not only was the Ephesian church willing to purge themselves of sin, but also of doctrinal error.

📖 Rev 2:2. **Q.** Who did the Ephesians “try”? What did they conclude about them?

In Paul’s departing words to the Ephesian elders he warned them of “grievous wolves” who would attack the church, seeking to draw men away into their perverse teachings (Acts 20:28-31). The Ephesians heeded this warning and stood guard against such men. The Ephesian church was a working church. They labored diligently for Christ, even in the midst of persecution. They protected the purity

📖 **Q.** According to v25-27, what was Demetrius upset about?

📖 **Q.** What do vss34-37 tell us about the city of Ephesus?

These passages give us glimpses of the nature of the city of Ephesus. Many in the city practiced “curious arts”, or magic. The city was given over to the worship of the pagan goddess Diana and housed her great temple. The pagan worship of the city was a defining aspect of its character and a cornerstone of its economy. It was in this environment that the church of Ephesus existed and sought to grow.

It's Christian Influences

Even in the midst of paganism and gross immorality, God provided Christian men and women to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage believers in Ephesus.

📖 Acts 18:19. **Q.** Who did Paul leave in Ephesus?

📖 Acts 20:31. **Q.** Here, Paul is encouraging the elders of the church at Ephesus before he leaves them. How long did he spend ministering in the city?

📖 1 Tim 1:3. **Q.** For what purpose did Paul leave Timothy in Ephesus?

The Ephesians had the privilege of many godly teachers and examples. Aquila and Priscilla were a godly couple working alongside Paul. They were willing to give their lives for him (Rom 16:3-4). Paul referred to Timothy as his “workfellow”, “my beloved son” and “faithful in the Lord” (1 Cor 4:17; Rom 16:21). Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus. He described him as a “beloved brother” and “faithful minister in the Lord” (2 Tim 4:12; Eph 6:21-22). Besides all of these, Paul himself spent three years ministering to the Ephesian church (Acts 20:31).

So, despite the ungodly culture within Ephesus, the Ephesian church

Their Patience

The word for *patience* in Rev 2:2 means “cheerful endurance” or “patient continuance”. It brings with it the idea of faithfully enduring while anticipating a beneficial end (Rom 2:6-7; 8:25; 15:4; 1 Tim 4:8-10). The Ephesians were faithful even in the midst of an unfriendly and immoral society. They were diligently continuing in the faith knowing that their faithfulness would one day be rewarded. This is commendable and a great example for all churches.

📖 Heb 12:1-3. **Q.** How are we told to “run the race that is set before us”?

Q. According to v1, what is our motivation to “run with patience”?

Q. How is Christ’s example an encouragement to us to serve God with patience?

All Christians will at some point face persecution and turmoil due to their faith (Matt 5:11; 1 Pet 5:10). Jesus Christ is the perfect example of one who endured persecution. He did it “for the joy that was set before him”.

📖 Acts 14:22. **Q.** What did Paul and Barnabas encourage the disciples to do? How would the disciples “enter into the kingdom of God”.

Following Christ’s example, the church ought to patiently endure turmoil and persecution while awaiting his glorious return (Titus 2:11-13). This patient continuance in the faith is a hallmark of genuine salvation (Acts 2:42; Heb 3:6, 14; John 8:31; Luke 8:15).

📖 Gal 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, _____.

Their Intolerance of Evil Men and Bad Doctrine

Rev 2:2-3 says that the church could not “bear them which are evil”, and that they had tried false apostles and exposed them as liars. Jesus commended them for their *moral and doctrinal purity*. A commendable characteristic of any good church is their desire to

church. We must always ensure that our labor for Christ is motivated by our love for Him.

Review

1. What does the uproar in Ephesus (Acts 19) tell us about the city’s religious culture?
2. Who are some of the godly examples that the Ephesians had as teachers?
3. What does Christ’s commendations for the Ephesian church tell us about their work ethic?
4. What “hallmark of genuine salvation” did the church possess?
5. In an effort to protect their purity, what two things did the Ephesians guard against?
6. What should the relationship between our labour for Christ and our love for Christ be?
7. How does the world’s concept of love and God’s concept of love differ?

of their church by not tolerating sin or false doctrine. Jesus Christ commended the church for all of these things. So what was there to criticize?

The Chastisement

📖 Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast _____.

While the church had much to be commended, they also had a serious problem. According to Jesus Christ himself, the church had “left their first love”.

Many have speculated about what the object of this “first love” was. I do not believe any speculation is necessary. The first and foremost love of any church should be for the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:27; Eph 6:24; Phm 1:4-5). This church, although they worked diligently for Christ, had lost the simple, child-like faith which characterizes all Christians when they receive Christ as their saviour. (John 14:21; Mark 10:15; Matt 10:37).

📖 Matt 10:37. **Q.** According to Jesus himself, who is worthy of him?

📖 John 14:21. **Q.** Who will be loved by the Father?

📖 John 8:42. **Q.** What is an evidence that God is our Father?

The Christian life is characterized by a love for Jesus Christ. This love is the motivation behind our obedience to, and our service for him (John 14:15; John 14:23).

📖 Eph 6:24. **Q.** How did Paul end the epistle to the Ephesians?

Paul could assume in his letter to the Ephesian church that those who claimed to be Christians were those who had a sincere love for Jesus Christ (Eph 6:24; 1 Cor 16:22). This sincere, child-like love for Christ is what is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:15).

A little child is completely dependent on, trusting of and secure in his parents. His parents are his authority, his providers, and his source of knowledge. This is the relationship which the believer is to have with

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 4:6; Matt 6:8; 1 Pet 5:7; Matt 10:29-31).

Unfortunately, it is all too common to see Christians who began with a sincere, child-like love for Christ to grow cold in their devotion to Him. Oftentimes this lack of love is the result of neglecting daily Bible reading, prayer and meditation on what God has done for them. The Christian who has grown cold in his love for Christ may continue serving him, but his service becomes a replacement for his sincere, devotional love instead of being motivated by it.

Love Must Be Nurtured

In Ephesians 5:25 Husbands are encouraged to “love their wives”. In Titus 2:4 the older women are told to teach the younger to “love their husbands”. Do married couples really need to be reminded to love each other? In contrast to our modern culture which teaches that love is a fleeting emotion that can be “fallen into” and “fallen out of”, the Bible teaches that love is a choice (Gal 5:13; 1 The 4:9; 1 John 4:7; James 2:8). Because our love for one another is a choice we must continually be reminded of our responsibility to nurture our love. Left unattended, our love can grow stagnant and cold. How many marriages could be saved if husbands and wives would learn to continually nurture and revive their affections for one another?

In scripture, our relationship with God is like that of a Father and child (Gal 4:7; 1 John 3:1). Our relationship with Christ is like that of a husband and wife (2 Cor 11:2; Rev 19:7; Rev 22:17). These types of relationships require attention and devotion, and must continually be nurtured.

📖 In Jude 1:21, Jude tells us to K_____ in the love of God.

So, how do we keep our love for Christ fresh and sincere?

Learn More About Who He Is

In order to love someone better, we must get to know them better. If we are to grow in our love for Jesus Christ then we should spend time reading His word. Jesus said that the scriptures “are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). The entire Bible contains a progressive revelation of who Jesus Christ is. You will find that as you read his word you will learn more about Him. You will develop a deeper understanding of his