

The Things Which Are

1. There were 7 literal local churches They have come and gone; but they represent all churches throughout the Church Age.
2. I want to begin with one of the most important things said to Churches by Jesus Christ Himself. In a few hours before His crucifixion, right after Judas left the assembly to betray Jesus, He said one of the most important things to His disciples and to every Church.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Here should be the heart of every Church. But unfortunately, few have shown this love throughout the history of the Church.

3. Every believer should belong to a local church and love one another and all should move to fulfill the Great Commission. We just noted the New Commandment by Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ has also given us the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20. That is instructing everyone to believe on Jesus Christ as Savior.
4. It is amazing the difference between the closing days of Israel in the Old Testament and the opening of the New Age of the Church. Everything is now so different. The work of the Holy Spirit is so different. Now every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Every

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believer can be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Every believer now has responsibilities to tell everyone about Jesus Christ; to understand the New Ages in the Bible. Every believer is to press on to maturity. Terminology is new and every believer is to learn. Everything is now opened to every believer in the new demands of everyday. It is a New Dispensation!

The Gospel is the same! People still have to be saved! by faith in Jesus Christ! But now something changed: now everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ comes inside your being. This is something completely new. This is why there is the requirement of the new book of the Bible, called Hebrews. And it should be noted that the dynamics of the end, under the Millennium will be newer and more dynamic than the Church. The study of Hebrews under the Old Testament is almost completely different that the Church Age.

What is so interesting is how things that started in the first part of the Bible, in Genesis chapters 1-11 under Gentiles is pretty much today under the Church. The Gospel is the same. Divine Institutions are still in operation. Man and Woman, God's creation and continue to the end according to God's plan. God's words to the woman and to men and to Satan in Genesis chapter 3 are still in order to God's plan. But, of course. the Church Age has introduced the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

5. The Church Age is designed as a service to God, was no longer a Nation, as Israel; nor is God using the Race of Jews. God is Not working through a nation or nations. God is Not Working through a race. God is working through something entirely new: The Church or the Body of Christ, entirely new than in Genesis 1-11. Not a nation, not a temple, but through the Church wherever they are found throughout the world: indwelling of the Holy Spirit—the

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Filling of the Holy Spirit. The Church is made up of all who are believers in Jesus Christ and work together as the Body of Christ.

There is no issue such as ‘Client Nation’ or denomination, no matter how larger they may be.

6. The Temple today is Your Body John 4:20-26 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Today there is No Temple, no nation, and no Mosaic Law!

7. Church Age: is from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture.

The Church Age did not start until Pentecost but some of the beginnings of the worship of the Church Age was told by Jesus in John 4:7-38

8. Every person who in the Church Age believes in Jesus Christ as Savior is Baptized of the Holy Spirit for all Eternity. They may not live in the power of the Holy Spirit but they are eternally indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

In the Church Age the power of the Holy Spirit is far greater than He was throughout the Old Testament. In the Church Age every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Every believer is a priest; with Jesus Christ as the Great high priest.

9. The Church exist in two forms:

One is by the Universal Church made of every believer throughout the world.

Secondly, by a local church assembly which may also contain unbelievers.

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10. The Word 'church' Greek word *ekklesia* which was made up of people *called out of the world by those who believed in Jesus Christ* making up the Universal Church Ephesians 1:22-23; by the Local Church in Revelation chapters 2-3.
11. In Gods plan there are two classes of people on earth: believers and unbelievers. The Church is made up Jews who believers in Jesus Christ and Gentiles who believed in Jesus Christ and once you have believed in Jesus Christ you are no longer a Jew nor Gentile. You are In Christ!

John 10:16 And I have other sheep, (other than Jews) which are not of this fold (not of Israel) I must bring them also and they shall hear My voice (by the true Gospel by Holy Spirit) and they shall become one flock *with* one Shepherd (The Church with Jesus Christ as the only Shepherd.)

Greater works will be planned for the Church:

John 14:12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; (bringing in Jewish believers) and greater works than these shall he do; (bringing in Gentiles) because I go to the Father.

What does this have to do with what He is saying? When Jesus Christ goes to the Father, the Holy Spirit is given to us.

12. Now we come to the 7 Churches named in Revelation 2-3

Start with a very important Principle:

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Christ is here dealing **not** with individuals but with assemblies;

So many believers like to be mavericks – think of themselves as individuals – in fact they actually pride themselves that they are not members of an assembly, they do not need to assemble with others – But these two chapters do not consider believers as individuals but as members of an assembly! Think of yourself outside of yourself, and learn to think of yourself as a member of an assembly of believers and that puts a whole new perspective on who you are! (Think of yourself as member of family, husband/wife; parent/child).

As we study these 7 churches, it is a little disturbing for we will see our assembly in some of them. If we will allow Holy Spirit to open our eyes we will see what is missing here, and how to get it. We will see things that are desirable, and things undesirable...

This is going to be a tough study in some ways and a rewarding one if we will listen.

13. Now, why did the Holy Spirit pick these 7 churches? – there were many other churches by this time in history.

These 7 churches have typical problems and circumstances and advantages of local churches throughout Church history. At any given time in Church history, you will find local churches in similar circumstances as these. They are common to all. These are selected– as representatives to all local church throughout Church history

So all 7 are very contemporary.

14. One Great Warning:

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Do not interpret the Bible based on American history. So many pastors think that America is the only place on earth to look at church. But the body of Christ is throughout all the nations.

15. Very important in studying of each of these 7 churches.
 - A. Messengers and Local Assembly
 - B. Title or Description given by Jesus Christ; the description of Jesus Christ is designed to what each local church needs; The description that Jesus Christ gives to Himself directs that need of each local church.
 - C. Rebuke or criticism or failure. What is interesting here is that here are two churches where there is No Rebuke! So diagnosis for these two is to *keep on doing what they are doing* That is close to unbelievable! Oh, you want to be like that?

Well, one of the churches will which is not rebuked is the Church of Smyrna. It is characterized as being *poor and in great suffering*.

- D. Commendation! All but one has some form of commendation. There is one church that has no commendation and that is the last of the 7 churches, *Laodicea* with nothing nice to say about this church. It is characterized by compromise and apostasy. If there is anything that causes me to think of these 7 churches being 'prophetic' it is this one. The Church in the world and especially in America is in a horrible state as a church. *There are few assemblies of churches walking in the power & leading of Holy Spirit by Faith but not many at all throughout the world*. So many different denominations and titles and works are a disgrace for a true Church. All these with different gospels to offer to different unbelievers and especially to believers. Different works verses the true Gospel. So the last

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Church is a perfect picture of the Church in the world today!
No commendation ... nothing nice for Jesus Christ to say about them.

- E. Exhortation or warning: encouragement to add what is missing.
- F. Promise: *he who has an ear let him hear.*

This is a challenge to everyone in every local church who is a believer. Also not everyone is a believer and not everyone is walking by the power of the Holy Spirit by faith.

- 16. Historical: applied to every local church where diagnosis fits. These 7 churches represent any one period of time in Church history. There will always be local churches like Ephesus, Laodicia, Philadelphia, Smyrna etc. there will always be believers like those in these 7 churches.

As we study these churches – some of you with church background, will probably say ‘I know a church like that’ or I know some people like that...” or “our church is like that...and this could be nice or it could be disturbing.” Each local church can diagnose itself by a study of these 7 churches, by the various issues that will come up. Things that should or should not happen if we are walking together in power of Holy Spirit.

- 17. Historical setting
 - A. When John experienced these visions and wrote what he saw the church was about 60 years old. (around 35 AD to 95 AD)
 - B. These 60 years were characterized in part by constant opposition from Judaism! -- direct physical attacks (Paul and others were murdered as followers of Jesus Christ) – but more importantly infiltration of Mosaic Law, of Spiritual Lies; into

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the teaching in early church. Trying to keep church like Isa. throughout it's history.

- C. Then of course there was some opposition from Rome.
- D. Then in 70 AD, the Jewish religious and government system lost their national identity and their own idolatry: The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD by Titus...
- E. But not only was there the presence of physical opposition but there was also infiltration of false teaching, false doctrine; and spiritual lies.
- F. Paul, in early Church history, in the 1st century had warned of apostasy and of false teachers. And by the time of John's writing, at the end of the 1st century John's writing in both Revelation in his epistles – apostasy and false teaching ran rampant. So it was befitting for God – Jesus Christ – Holy Spirit to write to pastor-teachers in the congregations—warning them of trends that were already developing, and encouraging them in the midst of opposition.

So it stands that these letters are addressed to pastors of these local church.

- G. Historical documentation: We do not know how the original 7 assemblies in 95 AD responded or reacted to these letters. But one thing for sure, the Church just got worse and worse – why? It is so difficult for man to walk by Faith in Holy Spirit! They prefer to trust themselves doing for God, Religion doing: repent, confess, keep law, persecute those in church who don't. Ever notice that Christians are cruel, vindictive to those in their assemblies – other believers in their families...anyone they have control over or think they do!

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The rise of the Roman Catholic Church controlling Christendom, Constantine and State Church the Church incorporated pagan beliefs and rituals.

The Church – became oppressive, enforcing their apostasy by force, justifying and killing, slaughtering of thousands, Crusades etc.

Demanding that all live by their relative righteous standards etc.

18. What is so interesting is that right off with the first church, Ephesus, Jesus Christ's charge was fundamental to Christianity: Spiritual Love! And right away they *lost their love of Jesus Christ*.

Jesus Christ in the last hours with the disciples He gives them a New Commandment:

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another

But from the 1st century on, the church has never been characterized by spiritual love. Instead it fought wars and persecuted one another right up to this day throughout the world.

But from the 1st century on, the Church Universal has never been characterized by Spiritual Love right up to this day. Today there have been few churches noted by Spiritual Love to one another.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has

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seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

19. But...in the close to 2000 years, the Church is still living and telling others of Jesus Christ as Savior.

We begin with the first local church which is Ephesus, an assembly without Spiritual Love.

But from the 1st century on, the church has never been characterized by Spiritual Love, but fought wars and persecuted one another right up to this day throughout the world.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

The First local church is Ephesus, *an assembly without love.*

First let's note a little about the city of Ephesus – why?

Good question, why spend our time studying this ancient city? Where do you live? Geographical placement by God -- and each area has it's own obstacles, distractions, opportunities, & dangers!

Just to get an idea – look at vs 13: *Where Satan dwells!*

Wow, who wants to live there?

Lets view this in America: living in North Dallas is far different than living in Dallas Center Iowa!

And so you don't miss it, there are challenges in Dallas Center Iowa but they are different, and that is what we are going to look at here with these 7 churches.

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Ephesus – a sea port city in Asia Minor–It was the Capital of the district of Ionia, and very important center of learning and commerce and a heathen religious center: By the way, heathen religion is not all that much different from religion that disguises itself as Christian!

But in Ephesus was the Temple to Diana – largest temple: one of 7 wonders of the Ancient world. made of marble, 425 feet long or one and half blocks! or something that most of you can envision almost 1½ football field and 260 feet wide or 86 yards wide; 60 feet high and made of gold and ornamented with expensive jewels – worship center of world — People please do not miss the importance of this temple in Ephesus and the local church there.

Because this was the place where Diana – goddess of fertility, goddess of love existed, note the problem of this local church. *they have forgotten their first love!* No accident, in the city of love, they have lost their first love, for they were fighting so much against. Diana was their saint to fight against prostitutes. And this was the center for the making of images of Diana---one of major cults of the day throughout the Roman Empire; people would come from the world over to purchase a statute made in Ephesus of Diana. They worshiped her!

In Acts 19 ---Paul had a great problem in Ephesus. Enough people were *responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ*; turning away from Diana, to Jesus Christ; that the sellers of statutes of Diana went down! And this led to a great confrontation between the artisans and Paul and Christians. They wanted Paul killed and they wanted this New Way --- ended!