

Revelation Lesson 29
Ephesus: The Lagging Church (Invitation)

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

We saw last time what Christ expected the Ephesian Church to keep on hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans and we briefly noted some information concerning that group.

He – Christ Himself is now speaking personally and directly to those Who are listening in the Church at Ephesus. I want you to notice an interesting point here though. Previously Christ was speaking to the Church as a single entity, now however, He is addressing individuals. These are going to be a select few. Why? Because of Predestination? Of course not! It is based on the next words in this verse...

that hath an ear, let him hear – This is a PERSONAL CALL. The late Oliver B. Greene stated: “Individual and direct responsibility to Almighty God is a cardinal truth and a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament Church; however, in the Roman Catholic church, souls are commanded to follow the church. Individual conscience toward God is completely ignored. It is the church, the pope, the priest, the bishops [even the saints and the (so-called perpetual) virgin Mary] who deal with God for the members of the church of Rome. But in the New Testament Church, individuals are commanded to repent and believe the Gospel. Individuals are invited to enter boldly into the holy of holies.”

Thus, we must understand that Christ has already told us before, in the Gospels, who can “hear” based on John 8:47 “He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.” So Christ laid down the first per-resquite: You Must Be Saved. He reiterates this in John 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:” However, there is another understanding here, and that is seen in our next point.

what the Spirit – The One doing the speaking will be the Holy Ghost. Some people will point out here that the Text says Spirit (with a capital “S”) and will call the Holy Ghost the Holy Spirit. TO learn more on this refer back to Lesson 11. Suffice it to say here (without repeating a whole other lesson on the difference between Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit) that the capitalized “S” spirit refers to the work of the Holy Ghost. I think based upon our study of the Seven Spirits in Lesson 4, I believe the Holy Ghost’s work here is focused upon His ministry of aiding the believer in Understanding. Thus this ministry of the Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Understanding.

Furthermore, for this Spiritual ministry to work in the life of the Believer, he or she must be Filled With the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) or led by the workings of the Holy Ghost. Once a person is saved, we stayed Filled or Led by the Spirit until we ourselves yield to temptation, after which we must repent of our sin and turn back to the Lord. Thus the second per-resquite for “Spiritually hearing” is not only to belong to the Lord, but you must also be “connected” to your Spirit Ears. Think of it this way, when you’re in Fellowship, you have your “Spiritual Ear Buds” in and you can hear what the Holy Ghost is saying. But, once you’re out of Fellowship (note that is NOT a loss of salvation) then your Ear Buds are removed and your cannot hear the Spirit

Saith – I cordoned off this word to show you a little nugget from the Greek language. This word – according to Dr. Waite - is in the “Continuous Action, Present Tense.” Thus in other words He said it then, He is still speaking today through the Word of God to those Who are able and willing to listen.

unto the churches; - Even though this is directed to the 7 Churches and now to the Individual believer, now the understanding is that to Hear any of what the Holy Ghost said, they had to be within the several churches. Why? Well, at that time, they HAD to be there to hear the Word of God.

To him – This refers to the overcomer. More on this man in our next verse.

that overcometh – Now many Bible scholars scratch their heads and wonder “who” are these overcomers? Some feel that these are somehow granted other specialties and/or rewards. Rather I think that these are those mentioned in 1 John 5:4-5 “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” Overcometh is mentioned in the Bible 11 times within 10 verses. The 2 verses just quoted constitute the only occurrences outside the Book of Revelation. All the other occurrences save 1 – from Revelation 21:7 “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” - are mentioned in the statements to the 7 Churches. So the overcomer is NOT one who “earns” salvation or any other “huge reward” but rather the overcomer is merely one who is saved by the “finished work” that Christ did on the Cross of Calvary!

will I give – Note the “I” there, that is Christ speaking. Just as He did in Ephesians 4:8 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” Christ is the One Who gave gifts unto men! Thus He again is the One Who will give out any rewards to the overcomers, because it is His Right to do so since He is THE Overcomer. We are said to be heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17) and thus since He owns all things we will also receive as Revelation 21:7 states.

to eat of the tree of life, - Here I want to make a very basic a cursory overview of the Tree of Life, because in a much later lesson from Revelation. When you study the Tree of Life, that is when you will discover the location of Paradise.

The phrase “Tree of Life” occurs in the Bible 10 times in 10 verses. However, all 4 references in the Book of Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12 and 15:4) are symbolic in nature and not related to our brief overview. The remaining 6 references pertain to our study. 3 references occur in Genesis and 3 occur in Revelation.

Reference	Notes
<i>Genesis 2:9</i>	God created the Tree of Life & placed it in the “midst” of the Garden of Eden.
<i>Genesis 3:22</i>	If man in his sinful state ate of the Tree of Life, they would live forever.
<i>Genesis 3:24</i>	God placed a barrier to prevent man from eating of the Tree in a sinful state.
<i>Revelation 2:7</i>	Access to the Tree of Life in Paradise, is granted to the “overcomers.”
<i>Revelation 22:2</i>	The Tree of Life is described as being in the New Jerusalem.
<i>Revelation 22:14</i>	Those that “do His commandments” his the “right” to the Tree.

which is in the midst of the paradise of God. - The Tree of Life, while said to be in the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22:2. Here we are told that all that is within “the paradise of God.” What is this paradise? It is none other than the Garden of Eden. It was also called “Abraham's Bosom” by many Jews.

In Genesis 2:8-15 we are told of the creation of the Garden of Eden and of 4 tributaries extending

from a central river. Those Tributaries or Rivers today were called the Gihon, Pison, Hiddekel (called the Tigris today) and the Euphrates. On your handout you will see a map of the possible location of the Garden of Eden.

Once man was evicted from the Garden, Cherubim and a flaming sword were placed near the entrance to the Tree of Life to prevent man from eating the fruit and thus be trapped forever in a sin-cursed body to deteriorate for eternity!!

At some point, we are not told when precisely, the Garden of Eden – along with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (it wasn't an Apple Tree by the way!) and the Tree of Life were all removed. It is apparent that it was removed into the Heart of the Earth. Now, Two of the Rivers – Gihon and Pison disappeared and the other two – Euphrates and Tigris – remain until this present day.

We are told that Samuel the prophet “came up” in his spirit form – what some folks would call a ghost – and he appeared to the Witch of Endor. Please note God did this act, not the Witch. Recall: 1 Samuel 28:14-15 “And he [Saul] said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself. 15 And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.” Samuel went on to state in 1 Samuel 28:19 that: “Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

Thus this was the only “so-called ghost” in the history of the world. Fast forward about 1000 years to the time of Christ. He tells us of 2 “certain” men. The use of the word “certain” indicates this was a real story. We observe in Luke 16:22-23 the following: “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

Furthermore, the rich man, Abraham (yes the Abraham of the Book of Genesis!) and Lazarus (no not Lazarus of John 11) were parted by what Abraham called “a great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:26). Lastly, the rich man begged Abraham to permit Lazarus to go to his 5 brothers and warn them of this terrible place (where he was) and to that Abraham replied in Luke 16:29-31 “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Abraham did not say that Lazarus could not return. But he said even if such an event happened the rich man's brothers had the authority of Scripture to convince them, not some multi-million dollar book like *Heaven Is For Real* or *90 Minutes in Heaven* or *23 Minutes in Hell* or any other sensationalist drivel. The point is that at that moment it “could” have been possible, with the last phrase in verse 31 possibly pointed back to the past of Samuel's “visit” and to the future Resurrection of Christ actually being physically, soulishly and spiritually “rose from the dead.”

Now, let's turn back to a previously mentioned verse and get the fuller context from Ephesians 4:8-10 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower

parts of the earth? 10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)”

Before descending into the Lower Parts of the Earth, Christ told the Repentant Thief in Luke 23:43 “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Thus this shows us that Abraham's Bosom and Paradise were one and the same.

Once Christ arose on Resurrection Sunday or Easter, He showed Himself to Mary Magdalene and told her in John 20:17 “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” Then a few moments later in Matthew 28:9 we read: “And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.”

So what do we see here? We see that within a matter of minutes Christ “led captivity captive” into the 3rd Heaven or the Throne-room of God the Father! You may say, how do you know this? Look at Paul's account in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) 4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Now 2 Corinthians was written somewhere around 57AD? and the events that happened in Lystra in Acts 14 occurred somewhere around 46AD? (Note we cannot be concrete when affixing dates – but Paul says it was 14 years prior to him writing 2 Cor. 12) Thus when Paul the Apostle was caught up into the “third heaven” he said he was in “paradise.”

When Christ removed Paradise/the Garden of Eden/Abraham's Bosom into the 3rd Heaven, the Great Gulf Fixed expanded which allowed Hell to “enlarge itself.” (see Isaiah 5:14) furthermore, at the Time of Christ's Ascension from the Mount of Olives (see Acts 1:9-12) those disciples gathered only saw Jesus ascending in what was then Christ's SECOND ASCENSION!

By the time we get to our text verse in Revelation 2:7 we are furthermore told that the Tree of Life is in “the midst of the paradise of God.” Notice the emphatic. See? “THE PARADISE OF GOD.” This indicates there is only one Paradise. Hence It's the Garden of Eden! It's Abraham's Bosom!

So, think about this! According to Scripture, Enoch, Moses (more on this later) and Elijah are still at this present hour in their physical bodies. This being the case, when Christ moved them to the 3rd Heaven in 30AD they became the first Astronauts AND Time Travellers! So take that Yuri Gagarin! 1 Gentile and 2 Jews beat the Red Commies into Space!! Hah!

Well folks that wraps it up for the Lagging Church at Ephesus! Next time we'll begin our look at the second Church, the one located at Smyrna, which I call THE LOYAL CHURCH! Let's Bow our heads.

