

Cultural, Historic, and Geographic Context



## Revelation Backgrounds 6

Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7



1

### Acts 17:11 (KJV)

**These (Bereans) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the Complete Jewish Bible by David H. Stern. (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1998).

Unless otherwise noted, images courtesy of the Satellite Bible Atlas and the Pictorial Library of Bible Lands (BiblePlaces.org)



2

# Topics

- Ephesus
  - Geography
  - Secular History
  - New Testament History
- Sevenfold structure of each letter:
  - Name of the city
  - Specific attributes of Messiah
  - Praise - "I know..."
  - Judgment
  - Encouragement
  - Promise to the Overcomer
  - "He who has an ear..."



3

*Revelation 2:1-7 (CJB)*

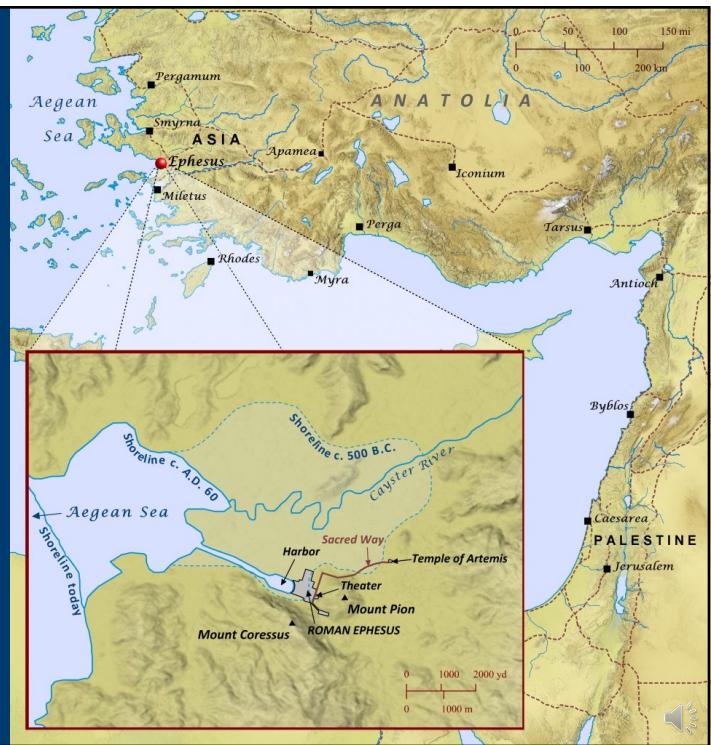
(1) "To the angel of the Messianic Community in Ephesus, write: 'Here is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven gold menorahs: (2) "I know what you have been doing, how hard you have worked, how you have persevered, and how you can't stand wicked people; so you tested those who call themselves emissaries but aren't—and you found them to be liars. (3) You are persevering, and you have suffered for my sake without growing weary. (4) But I have this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. (5) Therefore, remember where you were before you fell, turn from this sin, and do what you used to do before. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your menorah from its place—if you don't turn from your sin! (6) But you have this in your favor: you hate what the Nicolaitans do—I hate it too. (7) Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic communities. To him winning the victory I will give the right to eat from the Tree of Life which is in God's Gan-'Eden." '



4

# Ephesus Geography

- Western Turkey
- "Queen of Asia"
- Significant harbor connected to Roman road system connected Rome to the rest of the known world to the east
- Constantly silting harbor a significant factor leading to the eventual decline of the city



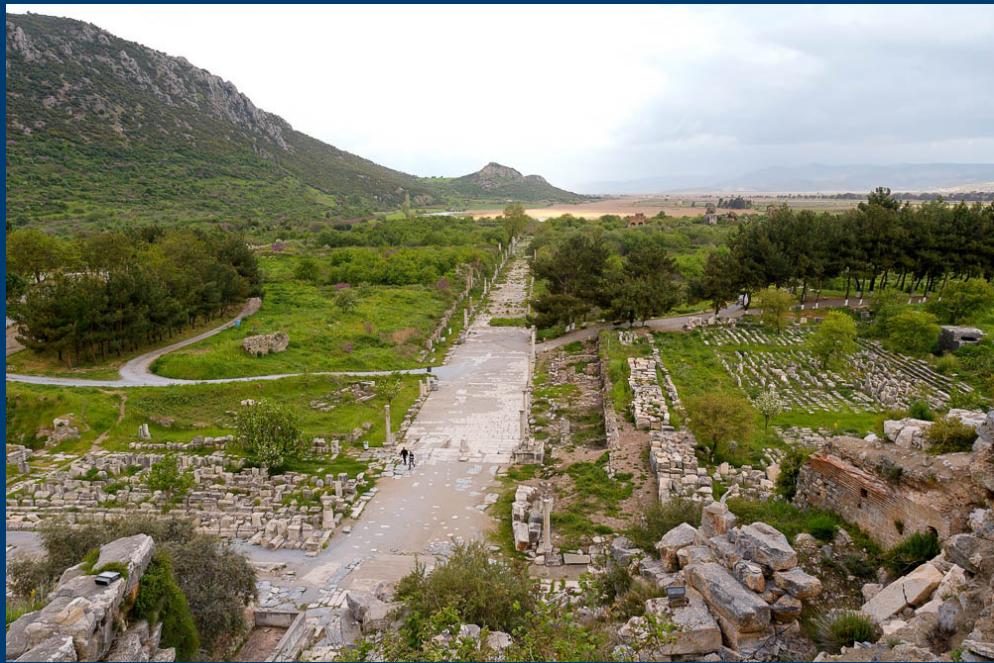
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## Roman Ephesus



6

*And they came to Ephesus*

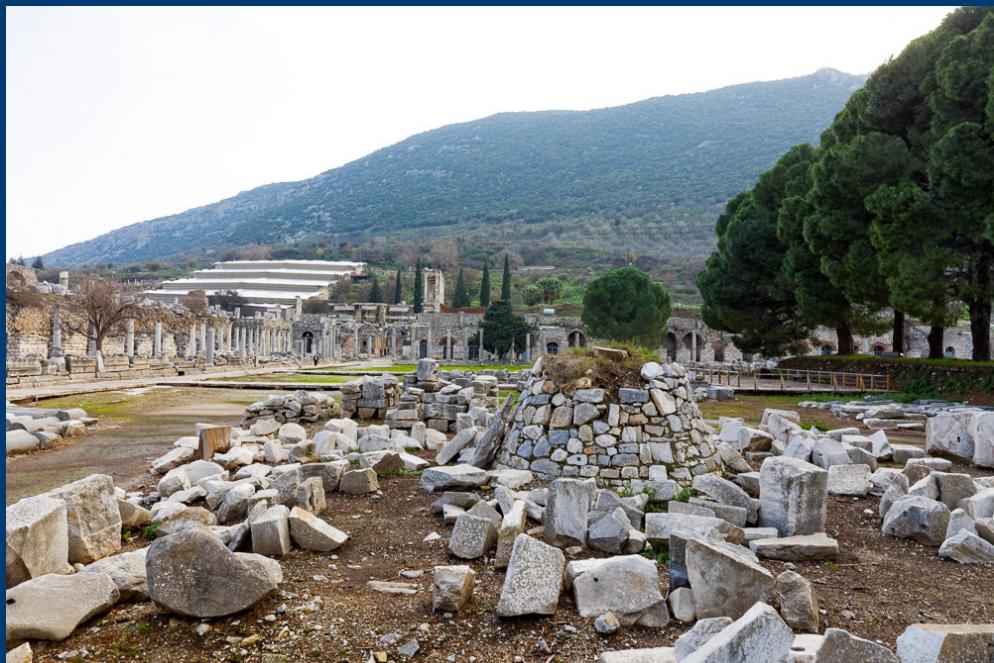


Harbor Street (Arcadian Way) in Ephesus, from the Great Theater

18:19

7

*And they came to Ephesus*



Commercial agora at Ephesus

18:19

8



• Founded by Hittites  
– Remains of an earlier city that later morphed into Ephesus

• Repeatedly picked up by Roman wars

• Under Rome it became a major religious center

• Queen of Asia - I think this refers to her influence in provinces, which were now silted over)

• Temple to Artemis was larger than the Parthenon  
– 4x bigger than the Parthenon, which was common, which leads us to Paul's letter to the Ephesians

9



## Ephesus - Secular



"Eph 2:1-3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins (2) in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (3) among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."



10

# Ephesus - New Testament

John ~ 40-100

- Epistles and Gospel from Ephesus
- Revelation from Patmos



Ephesus St. John's Basilica



11

*Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus*



Arcadian Way (from the west)

Paul late 50s

- Acts 18-20
- Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla
- Ephesus
- - ground zero for missionary activity
- - riot by followers of Diana/Artemis
- Wrote 1st Corinthians from Ephesus

Acts 19:1

12

*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*



Silver cistophorus of Claudius with a statue of the Ephesian Diana, AD 41–54

19:28

13

*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock*

- Ephesian elders were to guard against divisions and false teachings (Acts 20)
  - Internally: Acts 20:29-31 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you, and they won't spare the flock. (30) Even from among your own number, men will arise and teach perversions of the truth, in order to drag away the talmidim after themselves. (31) So stay alert!
  - Externally: "Paul's proclamation of the one and only one God threatened the city's very identity and its claim to fame, not to mention the livelihood of the concessioners like Demetrius whose trade depended on the worship of Artemis." David DeSilva
    - Remember the "beast's" economic and religious system when we get to later chapters

Flock of sheep with their shepherd at Ephesus

Acts 20:28

14

<b>Revelation 2</b>	<b>References</b>
(1) "To the angel of the (ecclesia) Messianic Community in Ephesus, write: 'Here is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand <b>and walks among</b> the seven gold menorahs	<p>Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, <b>there am I among them.</b>"</p> <p>Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word <b>was with</b> God, and the Word <b>was</b> God.</p>




15

<b>Revelation 2</b>	<b>References</b>
(2) " <b>I know</b> what you have been doing, how hard you have worked (or " <b>I know your works and your labor</b>	



16

Revelation 2	References
<p>(2) ...how you have persevered, and how you can't stand wicked people; so <b>you tested those who call themselves emissaries but aren't</b>—and you found them to be liars.</p> <p>(3) You are persevering, and you have suffered for my sake without growing weary.</p>	<p>Mat 7:23 Then I will tell them to their faces, '<b>I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!</b>'</p> <p><b>Eph 4:14</b> We will then <b>no longer be</b> infants tossed about by the waves and blown along by every wind of teaching, <b>at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive.</b></p> <p>1 John 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit but <b>test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.</b></p> <p>2 Cor 11:13-15 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even <b>Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.</b> Their end will correspond to their deeds.</p>



17

Tossed here and there by the waves



Boat among waves and rocks, near Jaffa

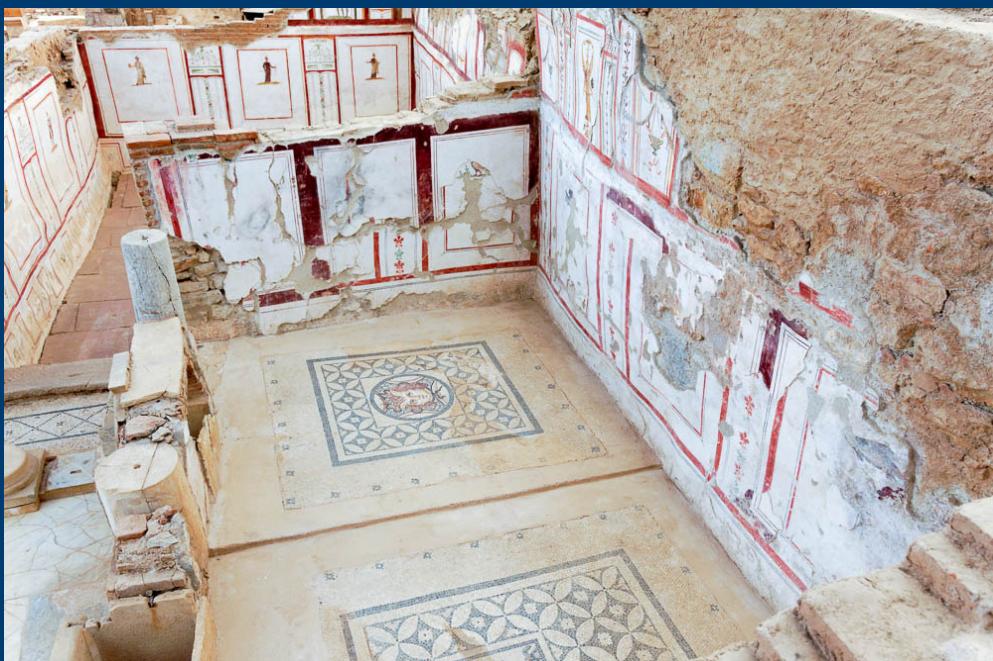
Ephesians 4:14

18

Revelation 2	References
<p>(4) But I have this against you: <b>you have lost the love you had at first.</b></p> <p>(5) Therefore, remember where you were before you fell, turn from this sin, and do what you used to do before. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your menorah from its place—if you don't turn from your sin!</p>	<p>Jer 2:2 “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.”</p>
	<p>Eph 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus <b>and your love toward all the saints,</b></p>



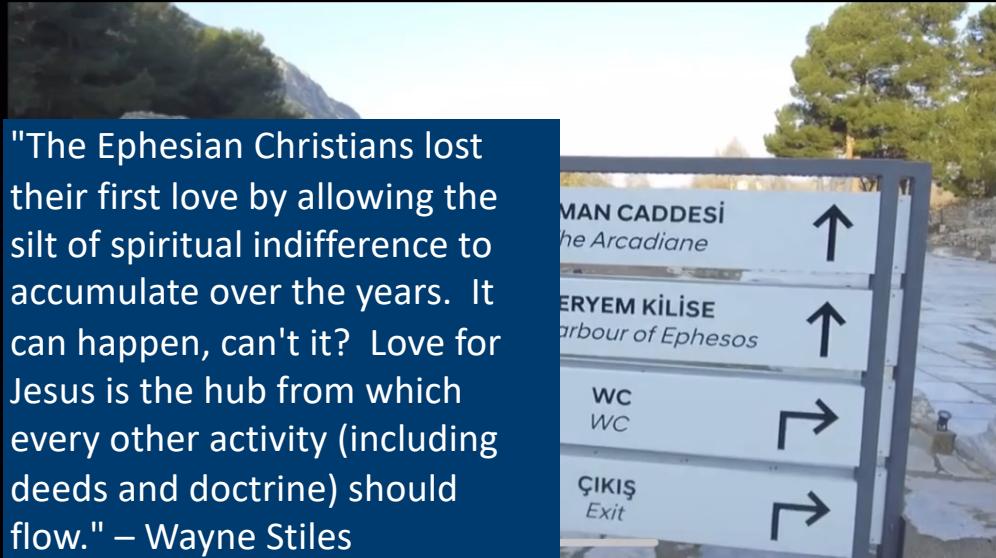
19



Ephesus Terrace House 2, room with mosaics and wall paintings

20

*You have lost the love you had at first*



Ephesus Harbor



21

## Revelation 2

6 But you have this in your favor: you hate what the Nicolaitans do—I hate it too.

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14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, **so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.**

15 So **also** you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.



22

## Nicolaitans νικολαιτῶν

- Conjecture #1: An early type of clergy that ruled the people (laity) with a heavy hand
  - Rationale: νικολαιτῶν comes from νικάω (to rule, conquer) and λαός (people, laity)
- Conjecture #2: A Gnostic cult founded by Nicholas, one of the original Acts 6:5 deacons that held that open sex was allowed
  - Rationale: νικολαιτῶν comes from νικολαὸν, and means "the people of Nicholas" νικολαὸν
- Conjecture #3: A heretical sect that claimed the Jewish dietary laws were done away with
  - Rationale: νικολαιτῶν comes from a "Hebraism": a transliteration into Greek of the Hebrew word נִכְחַד nochel - let us/we will eat!)
- #2 and #3 relate directly to Rev 2:14 and Acts 15:29; #1 does not.
- #2 and #3 are not necessarily mutually exclusive - they are linked in Rev 2:14



23

**Nicolaitans - Doing it their way  
(and assuming God would approve)**

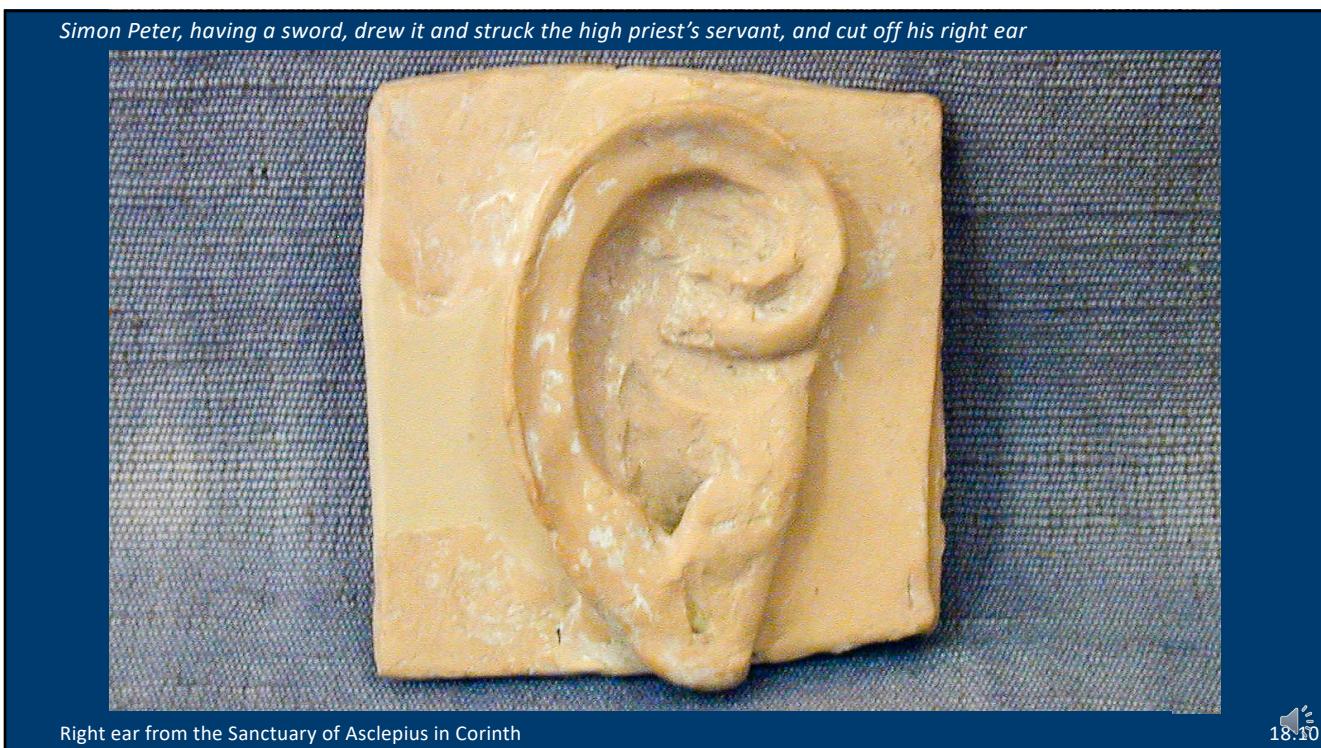


24

Revelation 2	References
<p>(7) Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic communities. To him winning the victory (or "him who overcomes"),...</p>	<p>Joh 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."</p> <p>1Jn 5:2-5 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. (4) For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (5) Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?</p>



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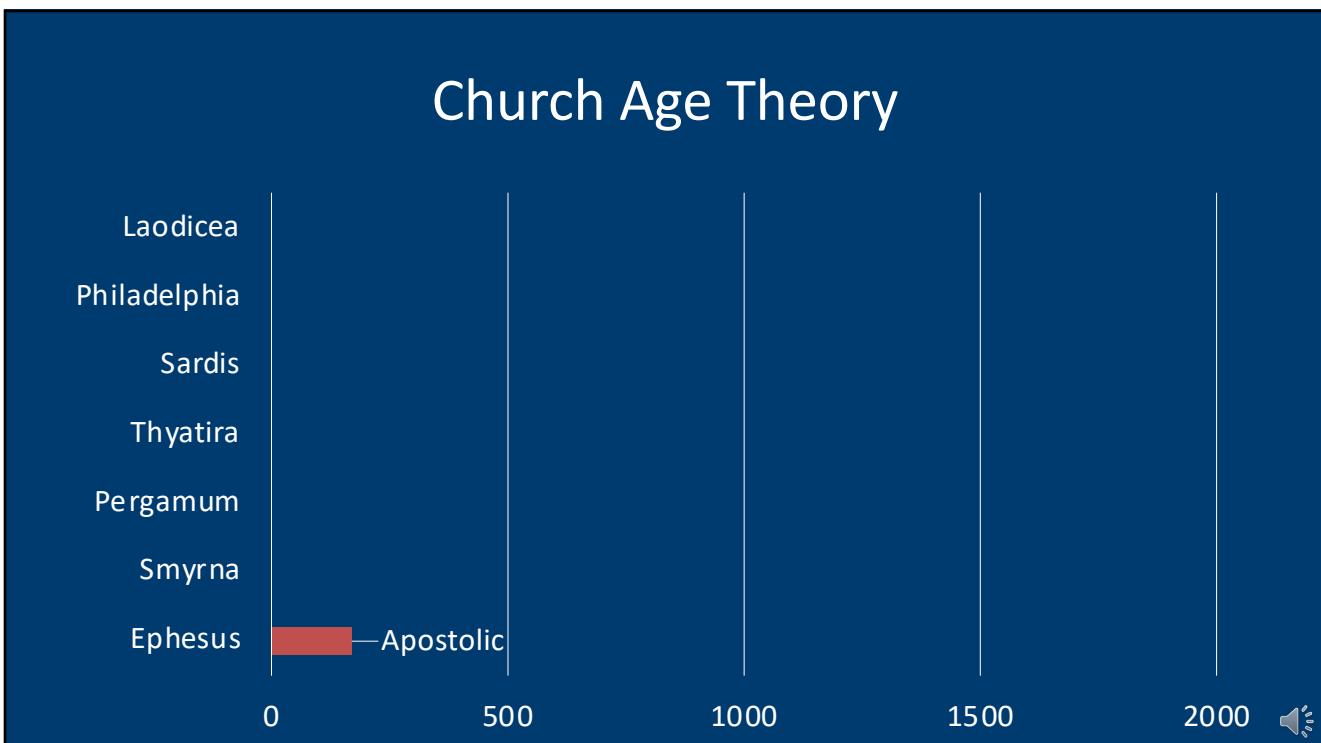


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Revelation 2	References
<p><b>7. To him winning the victory (or "him who overcomes"), I will give the right to eat from the Tree of Life which is in God's Gan-'Eden."</b></p>	<p>Gen 3:22-24 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.</p>




27



28

## Possible Parable Connection

Revelation 2	References
(2) ...how you can't stand <b>wicked</b> people; so <b>you tested those who call themselves emissaries but aren't</b> —and you found them to be liars. (3) You are persevering, and you have <b>suffered</b> for my sake <b>without growing weary.</b>	<p>Mat 13:3-9 And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. (4) And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. (5) Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, (6) but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. (7) Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. (8) Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (9) <b>He who has ears, let him hear."</b></p> <p>Mat 13:18-23 "Hear then the parable of the sower: (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, <b>the evil one comes and snatches away</b> what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. (20) As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, (21) yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and <b>when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.</b> (22) As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the <b>deceitfulness</b> of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (23) As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."</p> 

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## Possible Paul Connection: Ephesians

- Eph 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and **your love toward all the saints**
  - Eph 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
  - Eph 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **bearing with one another in love**, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
  - Eph 4:14 We will then **no longer** be infants tossed about by the waves and blown along by every wind of teaching, **at the mercy of people clever in devising ways to deceive.**
  - Eph 4:31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all **malice**. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, as God in Christ forgave you.
  - Eph 5:1-5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. (3) But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. (4) Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. (5) For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.
  - Eph 5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.
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## Possible Paul Connection: Ephesians

- Eph 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, **that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.** (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (13) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the **readiness given by the gospel of peace.** (16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can **extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;** (17) and take the helmet of **salvation**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the **word of God,** (18) praying at all times in the Spirit, with all **prayer and supplication.** To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints



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	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
To	Darling; desired						
From	Holds 7 stars/ walks among lampstands						
+	Don't tolerate evil; Persevered; Acts 17:11						
-	Lost love they had at first						
+	Hates deeds of people who do things their own way instead of God's						
Ear	Before promise						
Promise	Eat from Tree/Life						
Age	Apostolic (70-170)						
Parable	Four Soils						
Paul	Ephesians						

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies."



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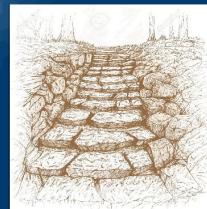
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# Talmidim Way



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