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## **Episode 60 - Decoding the Seven Churches: Ephesus**

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Join Scott Stanley from DTG Ministries as he delves deep into the mysteries of the Book of Revelation, focusing on chapters 2 and 3. This episode explores the journey through the seven churches, from Ephesus to Laodicea, revealing the intricate relationship between the letters and the seals in the context of apostasy.

Gain insight into the symbolism of the lampstands and the high priest's role as Scott unpacks the spiritual meaning behind the letters to the churches. Discover the profound message embedded within the seals of Revelation, and how they differ from the letters, each serving as both a warning and a guide to overcoming apostasy.

Through a detailed analysis, Scott highlights the importance of understanding Christ's teachings, the barriers of apostasy that believers face, and the ultimate redemption awaiting those who overcome. Tune in to enrich your understanding of faith and embark on a spiritual journey towards redemption and enlightenment.

Modified Transcript:

Scriptures are directly transcribed with notations. See KJV for verbatim wording.

Hi. This is Scott Stanley with DTG Ministries, exploring the deep things of God in the Book of Revelation. We have come to Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, dealing with the seven churches, from Ephesus to Laodicea. I have spent the last two podcasts trying to set up a basic understanding of what we are reading in these two chapters: Understanding Christ's statement that the lampstands are the seven churches, we looked at the lampstands- the carvings and ornamentation on them. We realized this depicts a redeemed person having gone through the seven churches that has come out of, or "burst forth" from, the understanding of the nations.

So, what we're seeing in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, is a person who has not burst out of it yet. It is a person in the midst of apostasy, not knowing it is apostasy, because the apostasy began in the first century. It will last until the second coming of Christ. However, a more basic understanding needs to be given here. What God has done, He has given you a picture of a person being converted, going through the seven churches, coming to Laodicea, and coming out of the seven churches. Revelation 4:1, "*I heard a voice as of a trumpet saying, Come up here.*" After those seven churches, you enter into a redemption that will leave the seven golden lampstands, a redemption from the apostasy.

Now, what's interesting is that there is another segment in Revelation that depicts the same time frame. It's the seals of Revelation. What is the difference? When you look at the seals of Revelation, he is taking you through white horse, red horse, black horse, pale horse, a cry for help; coming in and changing the way you see the sun, moon, and the stars, and showing you how the redemption of your doctrinal understanding takes place in Revelation, chapter 7. Revelation, chapter 8, depicts the redemption of your emotional side, your personal iniquity.

So, I've got two things going on at the same time- the seven churches and the seals. What is the difference? When you look at the seven churches versus the seals, you're seeing the work of a high priest. This is the risen Savior. In the seals, he's opening a book. The book is your story. We could just call it a storybook. He is showing you after you have been redeemed. He is showing you how you got there. After you've overcome

and you enter into the heavenly understanding, those seals show you how you came out of apostasy.

Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, is not a book. These are letters. A letter is different from a book. It is your High Priest expressing in the letters the problems that are being developed in your life because you are in the midst of an apostasy. The people from Ephesus to Laodicea don't realize the depth of the apostasy that they are in. You're going to have to come out of it before you can look back and realize the whole church system is following the man of sin. The whole church system is in apostasy from God.

So, we're looking at the seven letters versus the storybook- the story of how you came through it. Remember that Jesus, in Revelation chapter 10, comes down in a cloud, and he has a book in his hand. It's another storybook that he wants you to eat before you prophesy to Jacob. That storybook is seen in Ezekiel, chapters 2 and 3, where he states, "*This book is full of lamentation, mourning, and woe.*" Revelation says it's a little book. Why is it little? Because when you give the message, when you eat the book of the lamentation, mourning, and woe concerning Jacob, and you give your message of the love of God, of the Kingdom of God, it is just a short time that they will either reject or accept that truth.

We know the majority will reject it. From the giving of that message to their rejection, to the Second Coming of Christ, is a short story. It's a short time. It's a little book. The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are letters. It is not a book. These are letters from the High Priest to the church. (Remember, he's walking among the lampstands. He's walking among the candlesticks. He is there.) The letters apply to those people who have entered into Ephesus and will progress through Laodicea and come out on the other end, entering into redemption, being redeemed from all iniquity. So, two different things are happening here.

Well, what about this High Priest? We know that after the resurrection, Christ was seated at the right hand of God to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psa 110:4; Heb 6:20). There's something I want to read to you in Hebrews, chapter 8, concerning the High Priest, because this concerns the letters. It concerns the seals.

Heb 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens.

Now, first point about our High Priest: He's in the heavens. Now, if you want to take that literally, be my guest. But it definitely is spiritual. In his understanding, he's in the heavens. He understands like God does, and "the heavens" is a symbol of that. He is a minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man (Heb 8:2). Right here, I believe I could say the mind of humanity, the sanctuary, the true tabernacle where God can dwell- the true tabernacle is the Holy Spirit. Remember what we read in Revelation 21, where he sees a new heaven and a new earth. He sees New Jerusalem, the city of God, the Holy Spirit. This is the tabernacle of God, verse 3, Revelation 21:3, *that thing that contains, that holds God's understanding is the Holy Spirit; He is the Tabernacle.* So, if I look at Hebrews 8:2,

Heb 8:2 He is a minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. (Remember Isaiah 54:5, "*Your Maker is your husband.*")

Heb 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

Now, he, as your high priest, is offering us, you, gifts and sacrifices. What does that even mean? I want to read Ephesians 4:1.

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you're called.

Eph 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, and longsuffering, bearing with one another. (See, there is your first love- being brought back to that mindset.)

Eph 4:3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 4:4 You see, there is one body, one Spirit, even as you're called in one hope of your calling.

Eph 4:5 There's one Lord, one faith (which we know is the faith of Christ), and there is one baptism (into the death of Christ).

You are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. You are baptized by the Spirit into His death.

Eph 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all.

Eph 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift. (What does the High Priest offer you? Gifts and sacrifices. Well, here are your gifts.)

Eph 4:8 Wherefore he said, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and he gave gifts unto men. (Verse 11)

Eph 4:11 He gave to some apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists, to some pastors, and to some teachers.

Those are the gifts that your High Priest offers. He is to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Why do you need the gift? The gift is his ministry to you because it is his ministry that he uses to explain what he's talking about, to explain what he wants you to see. We are a religion of faith that comes by hearing, and how do you hear without a preacher? (Rom 10:17, 14) God has a ministry through which he will convey the meaning of the cross. He will convey the meaning of humanity and what is going on with God. He does it through His ministry.

If we are going to understand the letters in Revelation 2 and 3, someone will have to explain them to us. That is God's gospel order because He wants us all to be on the same page. Everybody is not to take off in a different direction and see it their own way. We need to see this the way Jesus sees it because we're justified by the faith of Christ. It is his faith that will save us. Hopefully, he has put a gift in your life to make clear what his faith and understanding are.

We have criteria to follow to determine if somebody is a minister of Christ. Try the spirits (1Jn 4:1). If they do not teach you that Christ came in the flesh, they are not of God. A liar will claim Jesus is not the Christ, but an Antichrist will deny the Father and the Son (1Jn 2:22). So, he has given us an understanding to help us determine who is teaching the faith of Christ and who isn't.

If you use the truths that God has given us through the apostle John, again 1 John, chapter 2; 1 John, chapter 4- that is the understanding of God through John. The Book of Revelation... well, this is the understanding of God to Jesus through John. He is giving it to someone to express it to you so that we can all see it, we can all discuss it, and we can try to determine its value, the extent of it. But we all need to be on the same page.

Why? There's one body. *There's one body, there's one faith; there's one Lord, there's one God* (1Co 8:6). So we all need to be on the same page insofar as we can understand it.

So, when you read Revelation, chapter 2, and you see Ephesus, and you see how Christ identifies himself, remember, this is your High Priest. He knows you're in apostasy. He knows you had nothing to do with it. He knows you are sincere, genuine, and honest; you want to serve God. He says,

Rev 2:1 Unto the messenger of the church of Ephesus write this; These things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands;

So, he's identified himself. See, he is Messiah. He has the message. He gives his message to his ministry. Another picture of this is in Zechariah, chapter 4. The message to Zerubbabel is, *"Not by might or by power, but by my spirit saith the Lord."* You see the golden candlestick, which is a lampstand. Verse 2, Zechariah 4,

Zec 4:2 What do you see? Well, I see a candlestick, a lampstand, all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it and seven lamps on it and seven pipes to the lamps.

Those lamps are your seven churches. What is the bowl on top of it? If we were to read this whole prophecy, you would see two trees, one on each side of the bowl. The trees empty the golden oil out of themselves. The trees are the *"sons of oil,"* the last verse of Zechariah 4. These are the *"two anointed ones,"* look in your margin (Zec 4:14). They are the *"sons of oil."*

This would be the Branch and the Priest. Out of the Branch and the Priest comes golden oil, or what? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit goes into the bowl. The bowl would be your prophets and apostles. Coming out of the bowl are pipes that lead to the seven churches, to the lampstands. Those pipes have to be his ministry, his voice, his pipes to the churches. Everyone is to deliver the golden oil. Again, if you deny Father and Son, and if you deny that Christ came in the flesh, you cannot deliver golden oil. That's impossible. So, look at Revelation chapter 2, verse 2,

Rev 2:2 I know your works of faith, your labor of love, and your patience of hope (I just took that from 1 Thessalonians 1:3) ... I know your works, your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil, you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and you found them liars. (Let me skip down to verse 4.)

Rev 2:4 You've lost your first love. You've left your first love.

Now, bear with me. If you have had a true conversion experience, then you have experienced the first love. Go back to the last podcast and listen to that again. If you have not had a conversion experience, you don't have your first love, which is produced by having the weight of sin and everything lifted from you, and what that creates in the human mind- your first love. Ephesus loses its first love, which they demonstrate because they are not as teachable. It is that first love that keeps you in a teachable place.

Listen, I've got to tell you, I just recently met a lady who is Catholic, and I asked her to give me her testimony. How did you find the Lord? What happened in your life that woke you up to God? She said nothing; she just looked at me. She said, "Well, I don't even have a testimony. I can't remember a time that I actually woke up to it. I just believe it." Well, Ephesus is about a person who has a testimony.

Ephesus is about a person who has a first love that they can leave. This lady never had a first love. She doesn't even know what you're talking about. She simply believes the priest and confesses her sin to him. She's never really woken up to a true experience with God. Her experience is with her priest, which fits perfectly if the pope is the vicar of Christ. He's the substitute. Well, her priest is the substitute. She talks about her priest the way Christians talk about Jesus- how wonderful he is, how magnificent he is, and what a great guy, you know... she just goes on and on about it.

Well, when he says in verse 2, "*You cannot bear them which are evil,*" I don't take that as people. I take that as thought, the evil thoughts. You know, what I'm sharing with you is coming from my own experience of going through what I went through and coming to the realization that God is true. Because, when I first became a Christian, if somebody said a curse word in front of me, it was like pricking me with a pin or needles or something- I couldn't deal with it. I hated the evil. I was like a newborn babe. It's interesting how your parents can tell you as a child, "Don't talk to strangers," and that's

a way to be safe. But when you reach, say, 40 years old and you're still afraid to talk to strangers, there's a problem.

There's a maturity that you go through. There's a maturity where maybe at first Christmas is paganism, but you mature and you realize the truth about it, and you're not afraid to stand out and say I'm serving God. I am not worshiping a tree; I'm not bowing to a tree. That's not what I'm doing. This is not paganism to me. This is a time to be with my family. So, if you're still living like a child, you've got to grow up and realize you're serving God in spirit and in truth... *in spirit and in truth*. But he says here in verse 2,

Rev 2:2 ...You have tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and you found them to be liars.

Now, think about this with me. How in the world do you think you tried them that say they're apostles and are not? How did you try them? There's only one way you did it- with the word of God. You had the word of God that you're reading (and by the way, this ties into those seals). You're on that white horse, you pick up the Bible, and the horse turns red. You're given the great sword, then black- you're judging the importance of verses. So you definitely think you can tell who is the apostle and who isn't.

Now again, Christ has given us the criteria for that. Do they deny the Father and Son? Do they deny Christ came in the flesh? At this point in your life, you don't know that. Ephesus does not understand that. Ephesus is in the midst of apostasy. But let me share this with you. Looking at the seals and how those horses change, why do we call them seals? A seal is a confirmation. When you get on that white horse (and you're as innocent as can be... you want to serve God), that is a confirmation that you're truly wanting to serve God. What do you do then? Well, you get a Bible. Do you really want to serve God? Well, you get a Bible, and you read it. By the way, the lady I was talking to doesn't even read the Bible- won't even read the Bible. Again, that's confirmation to me that she hasn't even been converted.

When you give your heart to the Lord, you want to serve Him. You want to know. I have to look at my own experience: I didn't want to know, *I had to know*. I've got to know what the truth is. So, what do you do? Well, you're in apostasy, but you don't know it. So, peace is taken from the earth, and then the black horse ... you start weighing the

value of the verses. Some verses have more meaning to you than others do. That is as natural as can be. You're a genuine believer. You're in apostasy, you're reading the Bible, and you think one verse is more important than the other. There's nothing wrong with that. That is a seal in your story. That is confirmation that you're a true believer. It doesn't mean you're right about every verse. You're wrong, but the fact that you're making that effort shows you're a true believer.

And then you reach this pale horse, where you begin to realize "God isn't even in what I'm doing." Only a truly converted person would come to that place and admit that. Why? *Because you want the truth.* It reminds me of John 3, verse 19,

Joh 3:19 This is the condemnation. Light comes into the world and men love their darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Joh 3:20 Every one that is doing evil will hate the light. He won't come to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

Joh 3:21 But he that's doing truth (he that's on that white horse that turns red), he's going to come to the light to make manifest that what he is doing is wrought in God.

In other words, if someone can show you the truth, you will follow that truth, not your denomination, not mom and dad, not the preacher, not the priest. You're going to follow Christ. If someone can show you this is the faith of Christ, that's what you will do. Well, Ephesus is making a determination regarding these people who say they are apostles and are not. He is determining this. How? He has to be using the Bible. Unless you're like the Catholic lady. She won't use her Bible. She'll ask her priest. I can hear it now. She's coming back to convince me to be a Catholic.

She's given me a man's testimony. I listened to it. He is a Methodist who became a Catholic priest. He gives his testimony about how wrong the Protestants are and how he came out of that and finally became a priest of the true church, the Catholic church. Well, that's who is going to confirm everything for her. It's not going to be the Bible. It's going to be the priest. Not so with what you see in Revelation, chapter 2, to Ephesus. Notice,

Rev 2:2 You tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and you found them to be liars.

Rev 2:3 So, you have borne, I'm going to say, 'with people.' You have had patience of hope with people, and for my name's sake, you've labored and not fainted.

You do it all for Jesus Christ. You're a new believer, and if somebody can point out things about Christ, you're going to do it too, because he is your hero. He's your Savior, he is your Messiah. Maybe what you're doing is wrong. Maybe somebody will come up to you and say, "Look here. You're supposed to be going to church on Saturday." You will go to church on Saturday if you think that's what God would have you do. You will go up to them at work and say, "I cannot work on the Sabbath. I will not work ... if you want to fire me. You can." You will do that.

Rev 2:3 You have borne with it, you do have patience of hope; for the name of Christ, you've labored and not fainted.

It does not mean everything you've done was right. It means everything you've done was of the right motive. You're serving God, but you're in an apostasy, and you don't know it. It is to this fellow he says, "You've left your first love. You've got to come back and be teachable." It's interesting in verse 5,

Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen... (from where you had that humility- you were poor in spirit, mourning, and so on.)

You were right where you needed to be so he could teach you, but you pick up the Bible, teach yourself, and side with people who see it the way you do.

Rev 2:5 So remember from where you've fallen, and repent, and do your first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place, except you repent.

When did God have the candlesticks (or the lampstand) removed? When Babylon came in, they carried all of the things out of the temple and took them to Babylon. Basically, if you don't repent and come back to a teachable spirit, you're going to be taken to Babylon. That's exactly what happened to me. It happens to every one of us, and it happens to the fellow in Ephesus. That's what you're going to see develop in the next

several churches. He is in Babylon. The candlestick was carried away, the lampstand was carried away.

Rev 2:6 But this you have, you hate the deeds of those people who teach "victory over the people," the Nicolaitans.

Victory over the people: They will teach you (they taught me) that you cannot overcome sin. You can find forgiveness, but you'll never stop sinning until Jesus comes and gives you a new body. When he gives you a new body, you can stop sinning in heaven. So, verse 7,

Rev 2:7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

I've got to say this: When he says in verse 6, you hate those people, you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, I did. I was reading verses in the Bible about being made perfect, and so on. I didn't understand it, but I knew we should be able to overcome sin. I remember asking a lady one time, "Is God in your life?" If he is, you'll know it. How can the Creator of the universe be in your heart and you not even know it? There's no change made. See, something's wrong with that. That was my reasoning.

I hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, people telling me, "You can't stop sinning, don't even try. You can't do it. You'll find forgiveness, but you can't stop sinning; that's the Romans 7 experience, man... that's in the Bible. You're doing what you don't want to do. You're not doing what you want to do. That's biblical. So quit trying. Just find that forgiveness." Well, Jesus tells you as your High Priest,

Rev 2:7 ... To him that overcomes, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

I can take you to Proverbs 3 and show you the wisdom of God, which is the cross and the understanding of God that you draw from that. This is a tree of life. But you've got to overcome first. What does it mean to overcome? You overcome how you see God because you see God the way everybody does- he's angry, and he needs to be appeased. He's just ... you goof up, he's going to kill you. You step over the line, he's going to burn you alive. Well, you can believe in Jesus, and when he sees you, he won't

even see you- he'll see Jesus. As long as you remain there and believe that, you can go to heaven and stop sinning when you get there.

But you've got to overcome that now if you're going to get out of the seven churches (because *"he that overcomes"* is in every one of them). You've got to overcome the way you see God. Let me tell you, *"God is love. Love does not make a record of your sin."* Jesus proved it when he said, *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."* The man was in the midst of being murdered, and he did not make a record of their sin. He forgave them.

God has been forgiving you your whole life. You have to repent to receive that forgiveness. But nevertheless, he overlooked your sin in his forbearance to give you the opportunity to enter into that love, to accept that love. That love is not a feeling. That love is accepting the fact that he is long-suffering, he is kind, and he is merciful. He is not condemning you because he loves you. Is that what a just God will do? You better believe it! There isn't anybody listening to this podcast who would condemn a blind man for being blind. You would not condemn a crippled man because he's crippled, and God looks at you as both. You are crippled and blind. The Gospel of John, Chapter 9, Verse 41,

Joh 9:41 If you were blind (meaning, if you understood how God sees you, if you understood that you are blind), then you would have no sin. But you say, Well, we see, we get it. Therefore, your sin remains. (Because you're applying your Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Adventist understanding to what salvation is.)

Therefore, your sin remains on you. That is why you say, "I can't stop sinning." You don't understand God's plan of salvation. To you, salvation means going to heaven. To God's church, salvation means being redeemed from all iniquity- first doctrinal, then personal.

It's my prayer that we all have a happy New Year. Happy means blessed of God—to receive the blessing of God. Happy is that God makes you happy... that's blessed. God makes you happy. I want you to have a happy New Year. I pray that many people might hear the truth and want something more in their lives, and receive it.

Most gracious Heavenly Father. I ask you to make these podcasts special and bless them with your spirit of truth. We worship you. We don't worship any man. We don't put any man before you, but we thank you for the men, the people you have put in our lives to help us stay on track, to follow you and your Holy Spirit, and to glorify you. We worship you and thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.