

# Ephesus: Basic Keys

## Revelation 2:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

<sup>2</sup>I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

<sup>3</sup>And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

<sup>4</sup>Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

<sup>5</sup>Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

<sup>6</sup>But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

<sup>7</sup>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.

## Revelation is a book of *prophecy* and the churches correspond to time periods

In the first vision John sees on Patmos, God shows him seven lampstands, with Christ walking amongst them, holding seven stars in his hands. Each lampstand symbolizes a church, and each star symbolizes the angel/messenger to that church. The application of the seven churches being ages instead of mere local churches in Asia Minor fits with the Patmos Vision in Revelation 1. Indeed, this first chapter of Revelation gives the setting to the second and third chapters.

- Revelation 1:3 establishes Revelation as “prophecy” (thus pertaining to both current and future events).

### Revelation 1:3

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

- In Revelation 1:4, John greets his reader with grace and peace, “from him which is, which was, and is to come.” The **IS** office of Christ is as High Priest/Intercessor; the **WAS** office of Christ was as Prophet (the Son of Man, God in flesh); the **SHALL BE** role of Christ is as King and Judge.
- The introduction to the Patmos Vision (Rev. 1:7) describes the return of Christ, coming in clouds, both to reveal Himself to the Jews (“those which pierced him”) and as Judge (“all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him”).
- The Patmos Vision highlights characteristics of Christ that show Him in the office of Judge.
- The message to each church ends with “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the **churches.**”

EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3, pg. 104

<sup>124</sup>Now notice, it says that the Spirit is speaking to the churches. That is plural, not singular. The Spirit did not have John write this down for a local Ephesian church, nor for the first age only. It is for all church ages. But this is the church of beginnings. And thus it is like the Book of Genesis. What started in Genesis holds true throughout the entire Word and finally closes out in Revelation. Thus, this church beginning in Acts is God's blueprint for all ages until she closes out in the Laodicean Age. Watch it carefully. Let every age take heed, for what is going on here is only the start. That little tree that was planted is going to grow. It is going to grow through the ages. This, then, is a message for every Christian through every age until Jesus comes. Yes, it is, for it is the Spirit speaking. Amen.

Christ's present role (“Him which is”) is as High Priest and Intercessor. How does Christ come to take on such a different judicial role? The messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 answer this question. There were certainly seven churches in Asia Minor, and each had characteristics that foreshadowed conditions of the Church into the future.

SMYRNAEAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.4, pg.170

<sup>186</sup>The Seven Ages as set forth in Revelation Chapters 2 & 3 take in the whole span of the Fullness of the Gentiles, or the whole time in which God is dealing with the Gentiles unto salvation [Rom.11:25]. In every single age, bar none, it says the very same thing in opening and closing the message to each age. "Unto the messenger of (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) write; These things saith He, etc., etc. "... He that hath an ear, let him (singular) hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

## The pattern of the message to each church

The messages to each church all follow the same pattern. In the first verse, Christ identifies Himself with several of His characteristics. These characteristics generally correspond to the trials that the Church in a specific age will encounter. I think this illustrates that in every trial we go through there are attributes of Christ to draw from that correspond to our trial.

Then several verses follow where Christ both praises and corrects the church.

EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3, pg. 87

<sup>59</sup>How beautifully the Saviour praises and commends His children. He takes full account of their fine spiritual attitudes and behavior. He knows that there is weakness amongst them, but as yet He does not cry out against it. Isn't that just like the Lord? He knows how to encourage us in the right matters and discourage us in the wrong matters.

<sup>60</sup>**We could all learn a good lesson right here in running the church and our families. And better still, we could all learn a good lesson in that God deals with each one of us in exactly this way.** Don't ever be discouraged, Saint of God, for God is not ungracious to forget your labors of love. Whatever we do, even giving a cup of cold water to someone, has a reward and blessing from the Lord.

Finally, Christ gives a promise to the overcomers of each age.

Church	Characteristics of Christ	Description of the church	Reward
<b>Ephesus</b> (2:1-7) AD 53-170	One w/ 7 stars, in midst of candlesticks	Church doing works w/o love → backsliding	Eat of the tree of life
<b>Smyrna</b> (2:8-11) AD 170-312	The First & Last, who was dead yet lives	Persecuted church, fear not what you'll suffer, be faithful to death → crown of life.	Won't be hurt of 2 <sup>nd</sup> death
<b>Pergamos</b> (2:12-17) AD 312-606	He with the sharp 2-edged sword	The age of false doctrine, founding of papal rule; "thou dwellest where Satan's seat is"	Hidden manna, white stone, and new name
<b>Thyatira</b> (2:18-29) 606-1520	One w/ eyes like fire and feet like brass	Age where papacy subdues, "thou sufferest that woman Jezebel to teach" etc,	Power to rule over the nations & the morning star
<b>Sardis</b> (3:1-6) 1520-1750	He who has the 7 Spirits of God & the 7 stars	Reformation age, "strengthen what remains"; hold fast and repent	White raiment, name stays in Book of Life, name to be confessed before Father
<b>Philadelphia</b> (3:7-13) 1750-1906	He that is holy and true, who has the key of David	Age of brotherly love, the missionary age, the open door	Will be a pillar in God's temple; name of God, name of City of God, and "my new name" to be written upon him
<b>Laodicea</b> (3:14-22) 1906-	The Amen, the faithful & true witness, beginning of creation of God	Lukewarm age: church is rich, increased w/ goods, needs nothing, but knowest not....	Sit with Christ in His throne

## Basic keys to understanding the church ages

How did Bro. Branham come up with the dates for each age, the messengers, etc.? He does not make claims of originality, that everything he shared in the Church Age series came from him. He makes frequent reference to the histories or commentaries he drew from, while also emphasizing leaning on the direction of the Holy Spirit. A major part of Bro. Branham's ministry was tying together truths that had been lost during the church ages. In no way do we disrespect or diminish his ministry when we acknowledge that he

### A major part of the ministry of Revelation 10:7 is to gather loose ends

IS.THIS.THE.SIGN.OF.THE.END.SIR\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-11 SUNDAY\_ 62-1230E

32-6 Somebody's come forth with a chart, and drew it all out, and somebody's come forth with another thing and drew this all out contrary to this one. Some's come forth and said, "This is it," coming back to this, and others has wrote books and things like that. But God comes in the power of His resurrection and who's going to speak against it? If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, He does the same that He did yesterday, today, and forever. That's what this angel is supposed to do, take them mysteries, them loose ends, that people run out on...

Notice, if it gives an uncertain sound, unscriptural, who can prepare himself? But a trumpet... Did you notice, each one of those ages, as I told you about the church coming in, there was a trumpet sounded, a seal tore loose. And a trumpet means war. And if it don't give a Scriptural sound, what about it? But let me call this to your memory. Don't miss it now.

IS.THIS.THE.SIGN.OF.THE.END.SIR\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-11 SUNDAY\_ 62-1230E

34-7 Now, watch. There's a lot of truth lost out there. Why? Where others compromised on truth. But this seventh angel don't compromise on nothing. He gathers up all the loose ends, gathers them all up, and at his sounding, all the mystery of God should be finished. Oh, God send him. All of the hidden mysteries was finished when he... It was revealed to him. By what? If these are hidden mysteries, the man will have to be a prophet. And didn't we just get through and see that the prophet that would come in the last age would be that great Elijah that we been looking for? Because these mysteries that's hid through the theologians will have to be revealed to God, and the Word comes only to the prophet. And we know it. He will be the second Elijah, as promised. Oh, my. The message he--he will bring will be the mysteries on all these things.

### Bro. Branham openly referenced his use of other men's writings in the church age series.

THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST\_ JEFF.IN ROJC 9-67 SUNDAY\_ 60-1204M

8 Now, I would not undertake this great Book of the Revelation ... of the Seven Church Ages. But I am depending solemnly upon God for--for to reveal it to me just as I come to it.

The natural history, which is of the--taken from the most outstanding historians that I know of... I have laying in my study room right now about five or six commentaries....

THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST\_ JEFF.IN ROJC 9-67 SUNDAY\_ 60-1204M

21 And now, with all the commentaries and so forth, I could not have brought all the books, so I just wrote--write down each time upon paper here, little notes from history and commentaries and so forth, that I might be able to just read it from the--the notes here instead of having the book and turning to the pages. However, when it comes to the Scripture, we'll use the Bible. And then in the commentary, I'll explain, or the history, who the historian was that said it, and so forth. Then in the... 'Course, in the event of the coming book, why, then we can type it up all right then and get everything the--did all right.

THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST\_ JEFF.IN ROJC 9-67 SUNDAY\_ 60-1204M

26 And it's such a marvelous thing, as I've been studying the histories, to find how that church begin, and how it pulled off, and what taken place, and to see that little Seed of God move through every one of those ages, completely go out, nearly, in one place.

THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST\_ JEFF.IN ROJC 9-67 SUNDAY\_ 60-1204M

68 As I have said before now, in this we're going to try to give a little breakdown now of the Book, according to the histories and so forth. And each time when you see me referring to pages that I have written here, it's stuff that I have taken from commentaries and so forth.

## Basic key 1: Both God and His ways are unchanging (the keystone of the Bible)

### Definition of keystone

A keystone (or capstone) is the wedge-shaped stone at the apex of a masonry arch or typically round-shaped one at the apex of a vault. In both cases it is the final piece placed during construction and locks all the stones into position, allowing the arch or vault to bear weight.

EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3, pg.67

<sup>1</sup>In order for you to fully understand the message of the Church Ages I would like to explain the various principles that allowed me to arrive at the names of the messengers, the length of the ages, and other factors involved therein.

<sup>2</sup>Since this study was to be the most serious one I had ever undertaken up to this time, I sought God for many days for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Then only did I read the Scriptures on the Church Ages and delve into the many church histories written by the most unbiased historians that I could find. God did not fail to answer my prayer, for while I read the Word and the histories, I was enabled by the Holy Spirit to see unfolded a pattern that runs through the centuries and right into this present, last day.

<sup>3</sup>The key given me of the Lord whereby I was able to determine the messenger for each age is a most Scriptural one. In fact it might be called **the Keystone of the Bible. It is the revelation that God never changes, and that His ways are as unchangeable as He is.**

### The church at Pentecost sets the pattern for how God works

EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3, pg.70

<sup>14</sup>Now don't get led astray here. When I said that God and His ways never change, I did not say that the church and its messengers could not change. The church isn't God. So she can change. But what I said was that **because of the unchanging God with unchanging ways we can go back to the beginning and see the first and perfect act of God and then judge by that standard. That is how it is done. The True Church will always try to be like the original at Pentecost. The True Church of today will try to approximate that early first one. And the messengers to the churches, having the same Spirit of God in them, will try to approximate the apostle Paul. They won't be exactly like him; but the true messengers will be the ones that come the closest to Paul,** who was free of all men, sold out to God, and gave forth the Word of God only, and manifested the Holy Ghost in power. None else would do. You have to work from the original. As like begets like, the True Church will always be the one that tries to follow in the steps of her founders at Pentecost and her messengers will follow the apostle Paul, the first messenger to the first church age. It is that simple, and that wonderful.

<sup>15</sup>**With this key, so simple, yet so wonderful, I was able, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to read the Book of Revelation and the histories and find therein each age, each messenger, the duration of each age, and the part each played in the purpose of God from Pentecost to the consummation of those ages.**

### The devil's attacks against the arch of God's work in our lives and its keystone

**The devil tries to wear away our confidence in this keystone of the unchanging God with unchanging ways, to cause our understanding of God and His ways to collapse.**

A bald arch is an arch featuring decay on the crucial keystones, through ground shifting, weathering, vibration, or design flaws. Each of these factors affects the mechanical relationship of the stones of the arch and can cause its eventual collapse.

14-4 THE.REVELATION.OF.JESUS.CHRIST - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.1

Have you ever noticed how Satan hates two books of the Bible more than all others? Through liberal theologians and pseudo-scientists he is always attacking the Book of Genesis and the Book of Revelation. In both of these books we find Satan's origin, his awful ways and his destruction. That is why he attacks them. He hates to be exposed, and in those books he is exposed for exactly what he is. Jesus said about Satan, "He has no part in Me and I have no part in him." The devil would like to prove that different; but he cannot, so he does all he can to destroy confidence in the Word. But when the church disbelieves Satan and believes the Spirit's revelation of the Word, the gates of hell cannot prevail against her.

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## Common errors in interpreting the Book of Acts

- 1) Despite scriptural and historical evidence against trinitarian baptism, most churches persist in baptizing in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. (Contra. Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; Acts 4:7-11, 30)
- 2) The supernatural elements of the Book of Acts are transitional in nature and not meant to be a permanent part of the Gentile dispensation.
- 3) Beginning with Pentecost, the third member of the Trinity (the Holy Ghost) finally begins doing His part of redemption.

TOKEN\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-19 SUNDAY\_ 63-0901M

96 It has to be, because a woman and her husband become one. They become one. And so does the Bride and Christ become One. The ministry of the Bride, and the ministry of Christ, is the same. And remember, "These former treatise, O Theophilus, have I wrote to you, that Jesus begin to do and continues to do." His death didn't stop Him. No, sir! He returned again. Not a third person, but the same Person returned again in the form of the Holy Ghost, and to continue the work on; and continues on, said the Book of Acts. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." That's the Token. That's the sign.

## Basic key 2: A true and false vine run through the scripture and the church ages, up to the present day.

EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

Now out of this first key that we have received of the Lord, there comes another and slightly less wonderful truth. I said that the True Church would always try to be like it was in the Book of Acts. That is exactly right. But we have discovered that the Word also teaches an invasion of error until there is a complete blackout of truth in the last day when the Lord is about to appear. The question now arises in our minds; does God forsake His own and let them fall into a state of complete deception? On no account, for the Scripture says very clearly in Matthew 24:24, that the 'Elect' CANNOT be deceived.

*"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, they shall deceive the very elect."*

What then? The answer is clear before us. There is a True Church and a false church. There is a True Vine and a false vine. But of course that false church, false vine body, will always try to usurp the position of the True Church and contend that she, and not the Elect, are the real and authentic. The false will try to kill the True. That is how it was in the Book of Acts, that is how it is set forth in the seven ages, and that is how it is declared in the various Epistles. That is how it has been. That is how it is now. That is how it will be. It can't change.

### The errors of the first church grow throughout the church ages.

68-3 EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

Since you now understand how we judge what the True Church was like (what she was at Pentecost and what she was in the apostolic age as set forth in the Word in the Book of Acts) we can apply the same rule to show us how the church failed. The basic error, or errors, that crept into the first church and were revealed in the Book of Acts and Revelation and also in the Epistles will become more and more visibly manifested in each subsequent age, until we come to a complete blackout of truth in the last, or Laodicean Age.

### Example: Revival in Samaria & Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:5-13)

- Deliverance from all kinds of oppression
- Confirmation of apostolic pattern
- Deliverance from dictatorship of men ... one of the first examples of the antichrist spirit at work in Acts

I.WILL.RESTORE\_ ZURICH.SWITZERLAND SUNDAY\_ 55-0626E

E-5 When he spoke--when they spoke in the pamphlet, I guess you noticed it, called me "Simon the sorcerer." Now, friend, you know I'm not Simon the sorcerer. And by the way, Simon the Sorcerer wasn't the one that done the healing; it was the other way. It was Philip done the healing.

Simon the sorcerer had a church, and it--it was a formal church, perhaps a state church, and he had them all bound down. And they didn't have no joy. They didn't have any power. But when Philip come down, he preached to them Christ, resurrected. Great joy came, and healing came. And then Simon wanted to buy that power. See how backward they had it? It was the formal stiff one that had the--was doing the sorcery, not the healing, or the power of the Holy Ghost. It was just vice versa.

**Characteristics of Nicolaitanism**

93-2 EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

But see what was happening back there. That false vine was getting a hold and it was teaching that rulership by man was right. It taught that the church had to be governed. It taught a control over the people, but instead of doing it God's way, they simply took authority and vested all the spiritual power in their own hands and came out with a holy priesthood standing between God and the people. They went right back to the old Aaronic system. They became antichrist for they disposed of His mediator-ship and imposed their own. God hated that. The Ephesians hated that and any true believer will hate it too.

We would have to be stone blind not to see that same thing at work all through the ages and right now it is the worst of all. What it was, was organization. That separated the people. God's people are supposed to be one. By ONE Spirit are they ALL baptized into one body and EVERYONE is to be moved upon by the Holy Ghost and EVERYONE is to participate in the worship of God. But men wanted the preeminence, so they took over control, and bishops became archbishops, and with imposing titles they by-passed the Word of God and taught their own doctrines. They got the people to obey them until the time came that their way of worship did not in any way at all resemble the early days after Pentecost. These deeds were the beginning of apostolic succession. From apostolic succession it was one easy and quick step to "church membership" as the means of saving grace. The Word was reduced to a creed. Antichrist by his spirit was predominating the church.

These key truths unlock what's really at work throughout all the Bible stories ... and our story!

70-1 EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

These illustrations [Cain & Abel, Jacob & Esau] depict perfectly the parable of the Lord Jesus Christ when He said that the kingdom of heaven was like unto a man who sowed good seed, only to have an enemy come and plant tares amongst those good seeds. God did not plant the tares. Satan planted those tares right amongst the good seed of God. Those two kinds of plants (people), from two different seeds, grew up together. They partook of the nourishment in the same earth, they shared in the same sun, rain, and all other benefits, and both were harvested in their turn. Do you see it? Don't ever forget these truths as we study the church ages and later the seals. And above all, don't forget that it is in this last age, when the tares are getting bound for their burning, that they will shove out the wheat that is to be garnered by the Lord.

70-2 EPHESIAN.CHURCH.AGE - CHURCH.AGE.BOOK CPT.3

I want to carry this thought all the way through, so let us go a step further. Have you ever studied the history of revivals? Now a revival signifies a move of God in power. And every time God moves, Satan is there to move also. It never fails. In the days of the great Welsh revival (and most people don't know this), the insane asylums filled up quickly, and there was a great display of devil power to take away the attention from God. It is written that in Wesley's day the people would do most peculiar things that were definitely of Satan to try to mock the goodness and power of God. In Luther's day it is said that the miracle of his ministry did not lie in the fact that he successfully protested the Roman Catholic Church, but the miracle lay in the fact he could, and did, stay sound and sane amidst the fanatics who were often filled with, and guided by, wrong spirits. And if you have been aware of this last day ministry, you will have noted the same invasion of false and wicked spirits. It has to be that way. Now I hope and trust you are spiritual minded enough to get that, and capitalize on it.