

### Lessons We Can Learn From Fulfilled Prophecy

- Several governing principles that should apply to the study of any prophecy:

- (1) Some Old Testament prophecy was indirect rather than direct prophecy.
- (2) While prophecy may be figuratively or symbolically revealed, we can expect it to be literally fulfilled.
- (3) Old Testament prophecy has almost always been fulfilled in a way that no one expected.
- (4) Some prophecy may very well have multiple fulfillments.
- (5) God reveals prophecy partially and progressively.
- (6) We recognize prophecy partially.
- (7) Prophecy is particularly profitable to those who can look back on its fulfillment.
- (8) Biblical prophecy was seldom fulfilled in the lifetime of those who received it.
- (9) All prophecy is pertinent to the present.

### The Problems of Prophetic Study

- (1) A word of caution about curiosity. By its very nature, prophecy is mysterious. That can be good, but it also can be a hindrance. Curiosity can be a dangerous commodity.
- (2) Beware of *“straining gnats and swallowing camels.”* We are guilty of abuse whenever we focus on the minutia of prophecy and overlook the message.
- (3) Watch out for inappropriate application.

### Prophecy in the Light of Its Purpose

- (1) Prophecy is used as proof of the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of God’s Word.
- (2) Prophecy should produce hope in the life of the Christian, which, in turn, promotes purity and perseverance.
- (3) Prophecy tells us the goal of human history.
- (4) Prophecy should create in us a sense of urgency.

(Note: This outline is from Bob Deffinbaugh’s paper on The Purpose of Prophecy. The entire paper is available for you to pick up at the info desk or you can visit the website noted above. We will print more copies if needed)

**Revelation 2:4** *“...I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”*  
**I Corinthians 13:1-3** *“...if I have not love, I am nothing...”*  
**Ephesians 5:1-2** *“Imitate God...live a life of love...”*

Revelation is a letter, a prophecy, and an apocalypse. In the first case, it is a letter addressed to seven churches in Asia Minor. The churches are commended for their positive traits, and challenged to make changes where they are falling short. Together, we might entitle this section, “Faithful Under Fire” as we see these early churches standing in a culture of persecution and all the temptations to spiritual compromise that went with it.

The first church on the postal route, is the seaport city of Ephesus. We know more about this congregation than perhaps any other in the New Testament. The challenge they faced is one that is very real for us today as well. To prime the pump; give some thought to how you might rate your “spiritual passion.” If you had to choose a number from 1 to 10 (1 being cold and 10 being white-hot) where would you place your passion level? Was there a day when it burned brighter?

### Introductory Material & Backdrop

#### Interpreting Revelation – 4 main approaches

Preterist

Historist

Futurist

Spiritualist

Re-visiting Ephesus: (Acts 18, 19 & 20; I & II Timothy)

*In light of what we know of the history at Ephesus – the commendations of Revelation 2 make perfect sense!*

Commendation:

Rabbit Trail for you Home Groups!  
“Does a Church have to die?”

To the Text: “I am walking with you....I want to walk with you...”  
7 churches – 7 descriptors of Christ...

Rebuke:

Solution:

A Word about Victory:

A Word about Love:

## Home Group Discussion Questions

### History (Making it Personal)

1. Thinking of the specific message to the Ephesian church, talk about a time in your life when you were the recipient of someone’s extravagant love. What did it look like? How did you respond? What did it mean to you? Have you loved like this in return?
2. Whether you are aware of it or not, you’ve learned a particular type of interpretive model! Look at the four main interpretive methods and talk about which ones have influenced you most. How have you tended to interpret Revelation?
3. Talk about the significance of knowing that Jesus is “walking with us” (Rev 2:1). What difference has this made as you face day-to-day life?

### Digging Deeper (Looking to the Bible)

4. Read Revelation 2:1-7
5. Talk about the key phrases from chapter one that are used for each of the seven churches and their significance to their particular issues:  
*Ephesus – I walk among you – 1:13*  
*Smyrna – first and last – died and live again – conquered! 1:8*  
*Pergamum – sharp, double-edged sword – 1:16*  
*Thyatira – eyes are like blazing fire - 1:14-15*  
*Sardis – I hold the seven spirits and the seven stars – 1:20*  
*Philadelphia – holy & true – holds keys of David – 1:18*  
*Laodicea – faithful & true witness – ruler of creation - 1:5-6*
6. Looking at Revelation 2:2-3 – Do you see similarities in our church today? What is the up-side to lots of hard work? What is the potential downside?
7. Revelation 2:4 reveals the broken heart of God – scan through Jeremiah 2:1-13. Read also I Corinthians 13:1-3 and talk about the power of love!
8. Revelation 2 challenges these people to remember, repent, and re-do! Why is “remembering” such an important part of our spiritual journey? How can we benefit from the spiritual “highs” of the past, yet not be defined ONLY by our past victories?
9. The Ephesian church responded to the message by burning idols and books that were displeasing to God. (Acts 19:19-20) Was there a time in your life that you burned some bridges with your past? When was the last time you took some radical action to insure a passionate walk with Christ?

### Taking It Home (Application)

10. Prayer – Lord, ignite the fire of passion in our lives again! Why is it so easy for us to drift from our first love? Jesus, would you give us a fresh glimpse of your incredible love toward us and let us respond to you!
11. Think of someone that this week needs a special touch from God. Take action! Plan some loving words or actions that will help brighten their day – and then do something about it!