

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA
Message 2
Words: 5978
Scripture: Revelation 2:1-7

INTRO: In the first message we covered a lot of information as we introduced both the book of Revelation and chapters 2-3. We looked at the method of interpretation. For some time a prophecy has been going around that the world will end or the rapture will happen or something like that, on September the 23. The prophecy is based on Revelation 12:1-2. Last Sunday in our German service I said, "September the 23rd will certainly not be the end of the world. Jesus could return for the church that day, but it would have nothing to do with Revelation 12:1-2." Why such an error? The method of Bible interpretation was all wrong right from the start. Even though the book of Revelation has more passages that involve figurative language, the literal, normal approach is the way to interpret this book. We saw that the book of Revelation forms the prophetic part of the NT.

We saw that chapter one of Revelation is the introduction to the book of Revelation, and chapter 1:12-20 is the introduction to chapters 2-3. And certain aspects of chapter 1 are introductions to each church with the exception of one.

We said that as we look at each church, we will look at the significance of the passage in its historical meaning. Then we will briefly the type of church it pictures. Third, we'll look at the time period it may speak of in church history and last, the message it has for each Christian personally.

So turn to Revelation 1. Look at verses 1-4:

*1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,
2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.
3 ¶ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

4 *John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,*

Note verse 4 and the words: *...to the seven churches which are in Asia.*" Sir William Ramsey says, *This remarkable expression, "The Seven Churches," must arrest the attention of every reader. At the first glance one might gather that only those Seven Churches existed in the Province Asia, and that the Revelation had been composed at an early date when there were no more Churches than the Seven,* end quote.

But the facts are there were numerous other churches in Asia. The letter to the Colossians was written to a church in Asia, but it is not mentioned here, so one certainly must ask, "Why these seven?" And like in all the rest of the Bible, everything is there the way it is for a divine reason because it is a divine book, inspired by God Almighty Himself. And as we go along, we will note some of those reasons, and you will begin to see why God chose each of these seven churches.

Now I have pointed out that we will look at the historical, typical, prophetic and personal purpose of the letter to each church and we begin with the church of Ephesus in 2:1-7 and we begin with the historical purpose. Here we will look at the counselee, the counselor, the commendation, the criticism and the counsel. So we begin with the historical purpose of our Lord's address to Ephesus and we begin with the counselee. The counselee is the church that is counseled.

The words we will look at this morning are Revelation 2:1a, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write..." Now before we begin, I had thought I would set out to do each church in so or so many messages. But as I thought this over, I thought I would just go as fast or slow as I needed to, in order to cover this section of Scripture by dealing with what I felt I should deal with.

I. EPHESUS

A. The Historical Purpose

1. The counselee 2:1a

We begin with the words, "To the angels..."

-To the angel

We begin with the words, "To the angel..." In chapters 2-3 seven messages are sent, each to a different church in Asia in existence in John's day. Each message begins with an announcement to the "angel" of the church. This may raise the question as to whether God sets a particular angel to watch over each church. J.B. Smith prefers this view. J.F. Walvoord, however favors the view that angel here means messenger. So let me show you something. Turn to Matthew 11. The original word in Revelation 2:1 is *angelos*, which is usually translated *angel*. But a search of the Scriptures reveals that it is used for human messengers as well as heavenly messengers.

So look at Matthew 11:10, speaking of John the Baptist:

*10 "For this is he of whom it is written:
'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'*

Now look at the word translated 'messenger'. It is the same word of our text, *angelos*. You might jot down Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52, where this same word is used for human messenger. So the word *angels* means messenger and may refer to spiritual or human messengers. I favor the view that these *angeloi* referred to in Revelation 2-3 are human messengers for I cannot see how an angel can be held responsible for man's actions.

-Brief history of the city of Ephesus

So we have looked at the words, "To the angel..." And now we want to look at the words, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus..." We'll look briefly at the history of this city, and then at the history of the church at the time the book of Revelation was written.

Now it would be very enlightening to do more study on the city of Ephesus alone. There is a huge amount of information on this prominent city. Let me show you how important Ephesus was. You see, Canada is now 150 years old, but by the time of Christ this city is over 1,000 years old! And at this time it was still a very, very important city. Let us say that if, from anywhere in the world, you wanted to visit Canada that Edmonton was the place you had to come to before you could anywhere else in Canada. That is what Ephesus was to Asia. It was a chief city in Asia and was also the gateway to the rest of Asia, and thus of the seven cities of Revelation.

Now let us say if you wanted to visit the United States of America, and then you too had to come to Edmonton first, what kind of city would that make our own city of Edmonton? Well, Ephesus was also the gateway to Rome. William Barclay makes some interesting points. He writes, "In later times, when the martyrs were brought from Asia to be flung to the lions in the arena at Rome, Ignatius called Ephesus the Highway of the Martyrs."

Barclay also says, "Its position made Ephesus the wealthiest and the greatest city in all Asia. Into it and out of it there poured an unceasing stream of men and merchandise, so that it has been aptly called The Vanity Fair Of The Ancient World." He also notes that it had very important political privileges in the Roman world (71).

Furthermore, Barclay notes that Ephesus was the center of the worship of Artemis or, as the Authorized Version calls her, Diana of the Ephesians. Barclay says, "The temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the world. It was four hundred and twenty-five feet long by two hundred and twenty-feet wide; it had one hundred and twenty columns, each sixty feet high, each the gift of a king, and thirty-six of them were richly gilded and inlaid... The image of Artemis was one of the most sacred images in the ancient world" (71).

Antipater of Sidon was an ancient Greek poet who lived just over a hundred years before the time of Christ. Here is what Wikipedia quotes from him, "I have set eyes on the wall of lofty Babylon on which is a road for chariots, and the statue of Zeus by the Alpheus, and the hanging gardens, and the colossus of the Sun, and the huge labour of the high pyramids, and the vast tomb of Mausolus; but when I saw the house of Artemis that mounted to the clouds, those other marvels lost their brilliancy, and I said, 'Lo, apart from Olympus, the Sun never looked on aught so grand'.

-History of the church of Ephesus

Now there is so much more to be said of this city and we will cover a little more as we now look at the history of the church of Ephesus. It is most likely that this church was started by the Apostle Paul. Timothy pastored here as well. It is thought that the Apostle John later also pastored this church. At Ephesus there is a place that is called the tomb of John. And because Jesus asked John to take care of His mother, Mary, it is believed by some that she is buried here as well. I do not know that there is any significant evidence for this.

But note that our passage says, "To the church at Ephesus write..." Notice it does not say, "To the churches of Ephesus..." In the early church, it seems there was only one church per city. Today we have denominations. And because we have denominations, we water down many things and compete with one another for many things. When a professing Christian of another church lives in sin, we don't make anything of it. It is not our business, so we think. And in most denominations, dealing with sin is hardly practiced in any particular local assembly, never mind regarding others from other churches. But in Ephesus, as in the other six churches mentioned in our two chapters, there was only one church per city. When Paul instructed the Church of Corinth to excommunicate a sinning member, that meant all the

believers in that city were to practice that excommunication.

So let us consider Paul's visit to Ephesus as recorded for us in Scripture. We go to Acts 19. Paul had briefly visited Ephesus on his way through to Jerusalem to keep a certain feast there but he had promised to come back. And when he came back, he landed at Ephesus, the gateway to Asia and here, in Acts 19 we have the account of his visit to Ephesus like this:

1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

2 he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

So Paul had found some believers in the midst of this very perverse and crooked city. But they were only familiar with the baptism of John. I suppose

some Jews visited Jerusalem on one of the three main feast seasons, and had heard John the Baptist preach. He then traveled back and converted some Jews and all these believers knew was the baptism of John. And now the Apostle Paul comes and tells them the rest of the story, and when they hear the whole of the Gospel, they are baptized again.

But what happened is what always wants to happen when the truth is preached so we go on in verse 9:

9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

Now it says they spoke evil of 'the Way'. 'The Way' was the early name for Christianity. So Paul then finds a more private place and continues reasoning with the Jews in the school of one Tyrannus, and we do not know anything about that school. Verse 10:

10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Now, Ephesus was a very wicked city and I want you to picture this huge and ungodly city that worships Diana of the Ephesians. Listen to a quote by William Barclay, "Besides being a center of religion the Temple of Artemis was also a center of crime and of immorality. The Temple area possessed the right of asylum; any criminal who had committed any crime was safe, if he could reach it. The temple possessed hundreds of prostitutes attached to the temple. The mixed nature of the population, the influx of the criminal classes, the immorality of the temple worship combined to make Ephesus a notoriously evil place. Heraclitus was one of the most famous of ancient philosophers; he was known as 'the weeping philosopher.' His explanation of his own tears was that no one could live in Ephesus without weeping at the immorality which he must see on every side. Such was Ephesus; a more unpromising soil for the sowing of the seed of Christianity can scarcely be

imagined; and yet it was there that Christianity had some of its greatest triumphs. R.C. Trench writes: "Nowhere did the word of God find a kildier soil, strike root more deeply, or bear fairer fruits of faith and love" (73).

And so much did the Word of God spread that not only Ephesus, but all of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Verse 11:

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

Picture this. Miracles are happening. The worshippers of false gods hear about this. They hear of people converting and beginning to live right. They hear one account after another. Those who travel through this central city hear the Word of God. I imagine the ships that travel the ocean pass the word on to others. They say, "Have you heard what is happening in Ephesus?" We go on in verse 13:

13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."

14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Now you can just imagine what kinds of stories this sparked. And what happened out of this? We go on in verse 17:

17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Now imagine this very evil city, and truth and righteousness and godliness is manifested through the Gospel. And all the Jews and Greeks who lived there heard what was happening. And fear fell on them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified! It became larger and larger! Verse 18:

18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Now we see here that repentance and confession of sin are the beginning of salvation. Verse 21:

21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

Note again that this commotion arose because of 'the Way.' That is because of Christianity. Guy Dowd, a Christian school teacher in the United States won the teacher of the year award one year. And he spoke of Christians in the public school, who were not recognizable as Christians. And then one day it dawned on him that they were undercover agents. That

is a description of our modern Christianity. We are undercover agents. Paul says that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, but that does not include North American Christians, because we are undercover agents. We are so undercover we are not recognizable by dress, speech, actions, business and stands against sin.

Now you can study the NT and you will find that wherever the Gospel went it aroused opposition. And behind this opposition is one mastermind; it is Satan. And when Satan does not get upset, you can be sure there is not enough salt in the Christianity to sting him. So, in Ephesus, a city Satan had a tight grip on, he was aroused by the truth of the Gospel. Verse 24:

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

Now just note, we have business men and money involved. This is where Satan gets a quick hold. Verse 25:

25 He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

26 "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

27 "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."

28 Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Now note what these people who were interested in money, used to arouse action against their material prosperity. What was it? Religion! The belief of the people, and that belief was wrapped up in Satan. Verse 29:

29 So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

30 And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.

31 Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

32 Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

We have seen firsthand the confusion brought about by people who are motivated by something other than truth and who thus rouse up the people. And here it says most of them did not even know why they were worked up. Verse 33:

33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.

The man who was put forward to give a defense for the Christians was a Jew and when the Ephesians found out he was a Jew, the chief problem against their false god, verse 34 goes on like this:

34 But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Now you have to hear an angry mob here. And you have to hear it go on and on and on. Two hours is a long

time to shout, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"
Verse 35:

35 *And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"*

36 *"Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.*

37 *"For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.*

38 *"Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.*

39 *"But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.*

40 *"For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."*

41 *And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.*

Go now to chapter 20. After all this, Paul later determined to go to Jerusalem again, against all the advice given him wherever he went. And as he was going, when he was in Miletus, he called for the Ephesian elders, and they came down to see him. So let us pick up the story as he heads back to Jerusalem in verse 13:

13 *Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.*

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

19 "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

20 "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

21 "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

23 "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 *"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.*

26 *"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.*

27 *"For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

28 *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

We fast-forward forward now some 30 years to the book of Revelation. Of the seven cities of Revelation 2-3 Ephesus was the closest to the Isle of Patmos, where John has been banished to and from where he writes the book of Revelation. It was only some 50 miles away.

So, let us consider one reason why God chose this as one of the seven, and the first of the seven churches. J.B. Smith, a Mennonite writer in his commentary on the book of Revelation says, "...Ephesus comes from the word meaning, 'let go' or 'allow', hence 'declension' or 'relaxation. Sir William Ramsey calls Ephesus 'the city of change'.

Well, we have seen the beginning of this church, and in the name of this city may be one of the reasons the Lord chose this church to be the first. Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians in about AD 60-64. Now John is writing some 30-35 years later and by now, in the Book of Revelation, there is a marked difference in the spiritual caliber of the church of Ephesus which is in its second or third generation of Christianity. What was the name of Ephesus? Declension or relaxation. And what has happened in those 30 years? It has declined or relaxed in fervor for the Lord.

That is the danger of every new church and every new Christian and every new Evangelical work. True evangelicalism almost always is soon headed for death by hitting one of two ditches; liberalism or legalism. Anyone who have been around here for 40 or 50 years, and stayed spiritually on track, and he or she looks about at the denominations in their town or city can see in that time that declension has already set in.

And do you know what happened to the city of Ephesus? Do you know how it lost its prominence as a seaport city? The river that flowed by it silted up the ocean bottom so that eventually they could not dredge it enough to allow ships to dock there. Little by little, it silted up. That is a picture of almost every church. Too many little things are allowed in. William Barclay says, "Before we leave this general description of Ephesus, we may note one more thing. We have spoken of Ephesus as the great harbor of Asia. Today there is little left in Ephesus but ruins; and today Ephesus is no less than six miles from the sea. The coast is now a harbor-less line of sandy beach, unapproachable by a ship. What was once the Gulf of Ephesus and the harbor of Ephesus is now 'a marsh dense with reeds'" (73).

What happened to the city? Thousands of little pieces of silt silted up the sea port. What happened to the church? Maybe thousands of little things were let go; and declension and change took place. This is the danger of every Christian, every church, and every evangelical work.

Arnold C. Cook has written a book called, "Historical Drift: Must My Church Die?". It was written in June of 2000. Many a church is now a marsh dense with reeds and he shows how that happens. The church is silted in with liberalism by many, many little compromises.

2. The counselor (1:1b)

So we go to Revelation 2:1b, to the counselor, and here we have a description of the counselor. It says:

2:1b *...These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand...* The speaker here, the Lord Jesus Christ, is described in a two-fold way. As each of the seven churches is addressed, some matter spoken of in chapter one is pointed out about that church with the exception of one church. It is that aspect of the description of the Lord that is pointed out to each church that is applicable to that particular church. To the Ephesian church, He is first described as the One who holds the seven churches in His right hand.

Now the right hand is the hand of power and authority. And we notice that it is not said that the Lord holds the churches in His hands, but the stars. The stars are either angels or the messengers or pastors of these churches. I believe the messengers represent the pastors. It is the pastors that are in the Lord's hands, not the churches. The pastor has a very important task. And the pastor is in the Lord's hands. It is not the pastor who decides what is right to do, it is the Lord. A pastor who does not follow the Lord is in danger for it is Jesus that is Lord of the Church.

Now why would a pastor be likened to stars? I chose seven or eight commentaries to be my main source of information and only one briefly mentions why pastors are pictured as stars and that was Lehman Strauss. A further 7 commentaries in the Onlinebible gave no information. Strauss says, "The stars are His light bearers, He holds them. They derive their light and power from Him" (35).

A star gives off light. Jesus said in John 9:5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He gave off spiritual light so that man might be enabled to walk in that spiritual light. He said in John 8:12, "I am the light of

the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Pastors are likened to stars, not to planets. Why is that? Turn to the book of Jude. Planets are not light bearers in the way stars are. Second, stars are stationary. They do not move about, but planets move. Look at verses 12-13:

12 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots;

13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Notice that these people serve themselves and they are clouds carried about by winds. They move about like clouds carried by winds. Then they are likened to raging waves, which also are carried about by winds. You see, they are moved about doctrinally. Ephesians 4:14 says, "...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting..." But stars do not move about! You can count on them to stay in one place. So look at verse 13 in Jude, these professing Christian leaders are like 'wandering stars'. And wandering stars are stars that move about. The word for 'wandering' is *planeetees*, and you can tell we get our word *planet* from this moving star or planet.

You see, a pastor cannot move about doctrinally. He stays in one place geographically, and he must stay in one place spiritually. He must shed the pure light. Why call a pastor a star? Well, he is not a star in the sense that we might call someone a basketball star, or a movie star. The task of the pastor is to gather the light given by the Word of God and reflect it to the people.

The city of Ephesus was first in importance; first in position, and first in numerous other ways. And to this church it is said that the Lord holds the stars, the pastors in His right hand. It behooved the Church of Ephesus to be an example to the rest of the churches. Whoever came into Asia or left by sea, came to this place, first and last.

CONCL: And so we bring today's message to a close. We looked at the words, "To the angel..." and I gave the view that this speaks to the pastor of the church. Pastors have a very important task, and are at the forefront of demonic onslaughts. Multitudinous are the devil's ways of derailing pastors. Yet the Lord says He holds them in His hands. However, as with believers who are in His hands, He never overrules the free will of the believer. For those who choose Him, there is no power anywhere that can remove the believer from the Lord's hands. But that may mean, for some, martyrdom. One of the difficulties of the early church was what to do with believers who recanted and denied the Lord, and then later recanted of recanting and wanted to come back to church.

We looked briefly at the history of Ephesus. It was born over 1,000 years before Christ. We saw that it was a horribly wicked city, but that the Gospel took hold there with power. Many were converted. Sometimes I think we are not bold enough with the Gospel. Try to picture these words of the book of Acts as I read them:

18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

And so a church was born in this very wicked city. Let me quote again from the writer, J.B. Smith, who says, "...Ephesus comes from the word meaning, 'let go' or 'allow', hence 'declension' or 'relaxation. Sir William Ramsey calls Ephesus 'the city of change'.

Well, you can write those words over the North American churches. This week I spoke briefly with a man from one of the town churches, and I said, "Are you familiar with the term 'seeker friendly church'?" He said, he was not. I said, "Are you familiar with the terms, "Emergent Church"? He said he was not. And I asked him, "As you look at the church today, do you see it getting stronger and stronger, or weaker and weaker?" And he said it is getting weaker. And he is, in my opinion, in a very, very weak church already. We are in an age of a declining church. We are also in a church of change. For those who were alive 40 years ago, the church was already changing. But some of us long for those days once again, because we have declined a long way from that time.