

LESSON 13

**Using the Principles for Understanding Scripture (4)
Background Information for the Teacher**

Objectives:

1. The student can use the ten principles for understanding selected passages.
2. The student can assist in studying Revelation 2:1-7 by using the principles.

Preparation:

1. Have ready to distribute Written Review No. 12.
2. Have ready to distribute Worksheet No. 13. (Fill in one for yourself.)
3. Have sufficient Bibles and pens.
4. Have access to a chalkboard or overhead projector.
5. Have a map of the ancient world (overhead or wall map) which will show Ephesus and Patmos. Be ready to point to places mentioned with your finger or with a laser pointer.

Lesson Plan for the Teacher

Introduction: (10 minutes)

1. Call the role and plan contact with those who are absent.
2. Make necessary announcements.
3. Songs and prayer as desired.
4. Give answers to Written Review No. 12. 1—Belshazzar. 2—70. 3—Medes and Persians. 4—Greece. 5—Alexander. 6—4 generals among who his kingdom was divided. 7—Jesus, Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, knowledge of customs, etc.

Learning Experiences: (30 minutes)

1. In this last lesson in our series, we will again use the 10 principles of understanding Scripture to dig into a passage. On your worksheet in the space provided, note when one of the 10 principles is used and how it is used. Open your Bibles to Revelation 2:1-7. Someone read these seven verses to set them before us.
2. First, let's get a picture of speaker/audience. **Q:** Who is speaking the words of Revelation 2:1-7? **A:** The one described in Revelation 1:12-17. **Q:** Who is this? This description could only fit one—Jesus Christ. **Q:** How is Jesus getting the message to the church in Ephesus? **A:** Revelation 1:11. So Jesus will speak the words to John and he will write them down and send them to the churches.
3. **Q:** To what church is this first letter addressed? **A:** Ephesus. **Q:** Where is Ephesus? **A:** On the eastern side of the Aegean Sea, on the western edge of what would now be Turkey. It was a very important commercial city of the time. **Q:** What do we know of the history of this church? **A:**



We do not know exactly how the church in Ephesus began but it may have been planted by Aquila and Priscilla when Paul left them in Ephesus about 52 AD (Acts 18:18-22). Paul spent more than two years there on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8, 10). Timothy also taught there (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians about 60 AD from Rome where he was in prison. This letter from Christ to the Ephesians was probably written about 90 AD. (History, Other Passages)

4. Who is meant by "the angel of the church in Ephesus?"
Let's do some word study. **Q:** What is the root meaning of the word "angel?" **A:** Messenger. **Q:** To whom does it usually refer? **A:** Heavenly messengers. **Q:** What other meaning may it also have? In Matthew 11:10 who is here called a messenger? **A:** John the Baptist. Here the word for "messenger" is the Greek word for "angel"—the same as in Revelation 2:1. So the word "angel" can also refer to human beings who work as messengers. We need, then, to choose between the two meanings: (1) heavenly beings who work as messengers or (2) human beings who work as messengers. Which is more likely here? Before we answer this, let's look at the context. **Q:** In 2:1, what is John told to do? **A:** To address the letter "To the angel of the church in Ephesus." **Q:** If John is to get the letter to the angel, which meaning of "angel" is more likely? **A:** The human messenger. How would he get a letter to a heavenly being and why would that be a good way to get the letter to the church in Ephesus? So, based on our word study, the "angel" is likely to be a messenger, minister, corresponding secretary, for the church in Ephesus, the one who receives their correspondence.
5. Now the author of the letter identifies himself. Read verse 1. **Q:** Does anyone have a reference Bible that points from these descriptions to another passage? **A:** Yes. **Q:** To what passages? **A:** Revelation 1:16 and 1:12-13, 1:20. **Q:** According to these passages, who is the speaker and what is meant by the stars and the lampstands? **A:** Jesus is the speaker. The seven stars represent the seven angels (messengers) of the seven churches. The seven lampstands represent the seven churches. **Q:** In what way is a lampstand a meaningful figure for a congregation? **A:** It should be a light, held up to its community. It should not let the light grow dim. **Q:** What does this description suggest about Christ? **A:** He is the head of the church, the one who is both the encourager and the judge of the churches. He is acquainted with them, walks around among them. All of His churches need to understand their relationship to Him and His authority. (Theology)
6. A good question to ask at this point is about the genre and structure of this passage. **Q:** What genre are we working with? **A:** A letter in a book that is primarily apocalyptic.



The fact that it is a letter within an apocalypse explains the nature of some of the language in the letter. **Q:** What is the form for this passage? Into what sections may we divide it? (Let the class try to come up with these.) **A:** Generally we would see the following sections for the letter: Salutation, Commendations, Criticisms, Promise or Encouragement.

7. We have already discussed the Salutation. The letter is to the messenger of the church in Ephesus and is from Christ Himself. Verses 2 and 3 contain commendations. **Q:** For what does Christ commend this church? **A:** Hard work, perseverance, faithfulness to the Word, enduring hardships, not growing weary. **Q:** How well is our congregation doing on these points? **A:** (Let the class discuss this application.)
8. The third section of the letter is the criticism Christ has for this church. It begins with the word "Yet," which suggests a change in direction. (Syntax) **Q:** What does Christ say has not been good about this congregation? **A:** They have left their first love. **Q:** How does He know? **A:** They are not doing the things they did at first. **Q:** What does He ask them to do? **A:** To repent and return to their former dedication and service. **Q:** Why would He commend their hard work in verse 2 and then criticize their works in verse 5? **A:** Two thoughts might be given on this. First that while some in the congregation may be working hard, the majority are not. Second, He may be concerned about the direction of the church. Its strong love once showed in its great zeal and a great spirit of service. While some good things remain, the love that motivated it is slacking. They are headed in the wrong direction. He wants them to turn around and head back toward the love and zeal they once had. Contrast this comment with what Christ says to the church in Thyatira: "you are now doing more than you did at first" (3:19). **Q:** How would we assess our congregation on this point. **A:** (Let the class discuss the direction the congregation is going in love and good works.) **Q:** With what word does verse 6 begin? **A:** But. This suggests another change in direction. (Syntax) He closes the criticism section with one more commendation: you hate the work of the Nicolaitans which I also hate. We don't know who these people are or what they did but they were probably led by a man named Nicolas who is promoting some false teaching.
9. The letter closes with a promise, with encouragement. First there is the encouragement to listen to what Christ says—"let him hear." Then comes the promise: "I will give him the right to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." **Q:** What does it mean to be able to eat of the tree of life? **A:** Adam and Eve could eat of this tree in the Garden of Eden but were shut away from it when they sinned (Genesis 3). This marked their "death," their separation from God. That was in the first book of the Bible. Now in



the last book of the Bible comes the promise that human beings can return to the tree of life, suggesting eternal life in the presence of God. Someone read Revelation 22:1-2.

Q: What is the condition Christians must meet to receive the promise of the tree of life? **A:** They must "overcome."

Q: What is the Greek word from which this word comes? **A:** Nike, which is the Greek word for victory, winner, overcomer. So now we know where the company got their name. So those who overcome, those who win the victory, will eat of the tree of life.

10.Q: Name which of the ten principles we have used in studying this letter. **A:** Conditions, Genre, Context, Speaker/Audience, Word Meaning, Syntax, Figures, Theology, Other Passages, and Application.

Application: (5 minutes)

- 1. Q:** Do we do enough encouraging as Christ did about the hope Christians have for the tree of life? **A:** (Whatever the group thinks.)
- 2. Q:** What other lessons can we learn from this letter to the church in Ephesus? **A:** To be growing in our love and works. To know how closely Christ stays in touch with His churches. Etc.

Assignment: None



**UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE
WORKSHEET NO. 13**

(Along with the answer to each question, note which of the ten principles are being used with that discussion.)

1. The passage in Revelation 2:1-7 contains a _____ to the church in _____.
2. The speaker in this passage is _____.
3. Four notable Christians who had helped the church in Ephesus were:

4. The "angel" of the church in Ephesus is probably a _____ messenger.
5. Who is the author of these verses?
6. This section's genre is an _____.
This one has what four sections:

7. This congregation is pictured as a _____.
8. The letter has a section devoted to _____ of the church.
List them.

9. The letter has a second devoted to _____ of the church.
List them.

10. The letter closes with _____.
What does Christ promise to the Ephesian Christians?

What must they do to receive this reward?
11. Name the principles we have used in this lesson.



WRITTEN REVIEW NO. 12
(To be used with Lesson No. 13)

1. King Belshazzar was the son of King _____ , king of Babylon.
2. Daniel was about _____ years old when he received this vision.
3. The ram of Daniel 8 represents the kingdom of the _____.
4. The goat of Daniel 8 represents the kingdom of the _____.
5. The one notable horn on the goat represents _____.
6. The four other horns that replace it represent _____.
7. That Daniel was written during the life of the man Daniel and not later is indicated by: (name at least one)

