

UNSTOPPABLE CHURCH

Then and *Now*
in 30 Minutes



Episode 45 - Warned

Listen Now

THE SETTING



We're now in **Turkey** to see what's left of the great **Temple of Artemis in Ephesus** (see Episode 31 for more background information). We've returned here at the start of a visit to the sites of the **seven churches of Revelation**.

Jesus had promised that the Church would be unstoppable ([Matt 16:18](#)), and Acts has shown us that's exactly what it became. And yet... the truth is, there are things that can make the Church 'stoppable'-not from without, but from within. And that's what was in danger of happening towards the end of the first century AD. So far, opposition had come almost entirely from the Jewish authorities (apart from a short period of state persecution under Nero in the mid/late AD 60s). But in the latter years of Domitian's reign (AD 81-96), a fierce persecution was unleashed as he demanded that everyone acknowledge him as Lord and God - something Christians could not do. It was during this persecution (c.AD 95) that John received his 'revelation' to both *challenge* the Church that was in danger of sleep-walking into oblivion, and to *encourage* them that, no matter what Rome or the devil threw against them, they would continue to be unstoppable, if only they remained faithful.



All that remains of the once-great temple of Artemis that dominated life in Ephesus



Ephesus was a very modern city with even things like public toilets and, yes, there were no dividers!

BIBLE READING

[Revelation 2:1-7](#)

KEY IDEAS

Setting the scene

John had been exiled to Patmos, an island 40 miles off the coast, where Christ appeared to him with a message for the persecuted Church - and in particular, for the seven churches for which John had responsibility. There were other churches in this region (Colosse, Lystra, Derbe, Miletus); but 'seven' symbolised completeness in Judaism, so these seven churches also represent the whole Church; and the issues addressed embody issues that the Church has struggled with throughout the ages.

Background to the church in Ephesus

The church in Ephesus had an incredible heritage: it had been founded by Paul ([Acts 18:18-21](#); [19:1-20:3](#)), nurtured by Priscilla and Aquila and Timothy, pastored by John, become home to Mary, Jesus' mother. So, what a great church it must have been! And what an influential city it was located in!

The good

Despite all these advantages, the church had ended up settling for loveless orthodoxy rather than passionate commitment. Addressing "the angel of the church" (v1) - probably representing the church leaders, who in turn represent the whole church (for every 'you' and 'your' is plural) - Christ begins by reminding them that he still "walks among the seven golden lampstands" (the churches). In other words, despite everything that was going on, he was still with them. He knows everything about the church: their deeds, hard work and perseverance; that they had stood for truth and exposed error (v2-3); that they had rejected the Nicolaitans who said that Christians could compromise with secular society and that spiritual liberty meant they could practise idolatry and immorality (v6).

The bad

And yet... “You have forsaken the love you had at first”, he tells them (v4). They were brilliant at sound theology and were quick to expose error; but they had lost the most fundamental value of following Jesus: love. (And good theology without love, is as bad as love without good theology.)

The challenge

Jesus therefore calls them to remember what they had fallen from, to repent of where they had ended up, and to respond by returning to live like they did when they came to Christ. And here is the scary part: if they don't, he warns them that he will remove their lampstand - that is, destroy the church. What a thought, that Jesus would rather destroy a church than let it be a bad representation of him!

The promise

And yet, if they will listen to the Spirit (v7), Jesus promises that they will “overcome” (the Greek word means ‘to prevail in face of obstacles’) and will still get to eat from the tree of life (v7).



1. Think about your own life: is it still as full of love, for Jesus and for others, as when you first became a Christian? If not, what needs to change?
2. Jesus was “full of grace and truth” ([Acts 1:14](#)). What about you? Do you emphasise the truth aspect or the love aspect of the gospel? And what needs to change in you to keep both in perfect balance?
3. The pressure to compromise with secular society is huge today. So how can we resolve to hear Jesus’ warning to not let this happen and so see the Church becoming unstoppable once again?



For a behind-the-scenes glimpse into what was involved to create this podcast series listen to Mike and David recounting their experiences!

[Listen Now](#)

How about listening to other UCB Bible-based podcasts from Mike and David:

Bible Books in 30 Minutes

Bible Biogs in 30 Minutes

Bible Surprises! in 30 Minutes

and the series that preceded

Unstoppable Church, Then and Now in 30 Minutes

called *Jesus, Then And Now in 30 Minutes*.

They are all available on the UCB Player app and from other podcast providers.

Why not download UCB Player from your app store now?

Download the free UCB Player app now.



UCB UNITED
CHRISTIAN
BROADCASTERS



[Privacy](#)

[Terms](#)

[View Online](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

© 2024 United Christian Broadcasters Ltd.

Company registered in England & Wales 2182533. Registered Charity 299128