

The messages to the **Seven Churches** in the Revelation chronicle the history of the Christian Church from the time of the Apostles of Jesus Christ until the earth's final generation, before His Second Coming. John, as a scribe of Jesus Christ, pens words of approbation, warning, and hope in letters to seven churches of Asia Minor that were in existence at the time of the writing of the Revelation (~A.D.85). With each church, Jesus identifies Himself in a distinct manner, revealing a characteristic of His divine nature. He Who "*searches the hearts and tries the reins,*" knows the works of each person and gives counsel and reproof accordingly to the *Israel of God*, those who overcome by His faith. The story of the seven churches is the story of Christ's presence in their midst throughout time. Coming first as the **Lamb of God** that takes away the sins of the world, the Revelation describes the victory of Jesus, Who was slain and lives forevermore (Revelation 5:1-12). Next, as **High Priest** in the first apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, Christ daily made intercession on behalf of His beloved, the Church for whom He died (Hebrews 4:14-16). Later, we behold Christ in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, the *Holiest of Holy*. There as High Priest and **Judge**, Jesus, with His own blood, purges the sins of those that have made preparation for His Second Coming (Dan 7:13, 14). The Revelation concludes with Jesus' return as **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**, to receive His Bride and to take vengeance upon the wicked who have spurned His gift of salvation. While the words of counsel are timeless,

and given to churches representing different eras, they all culminate in the last church, Laodicea. It is this last church to which God purposes to fulfill the **Mystery of Godliness**, man's complete victory over sin before His Second Coming. We will learn of the first six churches in this lesson, and reserve the next lesson for the seventh church, Laodicea.

Ephesus, meaning "*desirable*", alludes to the church of the apostolic era (A.D.31-100) that was empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the gospel in all of Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. Comprised of the Apostles of Christ, His disciples, and eyewitness to His ministry, the church was pure in its doctrine, diligent in its labors, and it abhorred the immoral, licentious Nicolaitans. Ephesus was a port city bordering the Aegean Sea and was the second largest city of the Roman Empire, after Rome itself. The city was known for its devout pagan worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana) whose temple within the city was one of the *Great Wonders of the Ancient World* (Acts 19:34, 35). Though faithful in its service and works for God, Jesus warns the church that it had, "*forsaken its first love*". This warning may allude to compromises and vain traditions of men that began to infiltrate the church from false teachers (Titus 1:10-16). Jesus, Who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven lampstands (the churches) counsels them to, "*Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.*" Those who failed to heed Jesus' warning were to have their, "*lampstand removed from its place* [among the other six]", meaning being removed

from God's presence and His *Book of Life*. For those who repented, Jesus promised they would eat from the *Tree of Life* that is in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:1-7).

Smyrna, meaning "myrrh" or "sweet smelling", was located north of Ephesus along the Aegean Sea and was similarly a premier port city of the Roman Empire. Alluding to the era of the persecuted church (A.D.100-313), paralleled by the **Red Horse of Revelation chapter 6**, the saints in Smyrna fell under the sword and cruel oppression of Pagan Roman emperors. Coming to the church as He Who is "*First and the Last, who died and came to life again*", Jesus forewarned the followers in Smyrna of the devil's relentless attacks by those within the church- professing Jews, but were actually of the "*synagogue of Satan*". Jesus foretold the church of coming afflictions, slander, imprisonment, persecution, and even death. For their wealth of faith in the midst of great trial, Jesus offered no words of reproof but only encouragement. As One Who also endured great "*contradiction of men, even to the point of death*", and was yet victorious, Jesus offered life as the victor's crown to those who overcame in Smyrna. He assured the faithful of this church that they "*will not be hurt at all by the Second Death*" (Rev 2:8-11; 20:14, 15).

Pergamum, meaning "tower", was the northernmost of the seven churches and was situated like a citadel above a valley. This church alludes to the compromising church (early A.D.300's-Mid 500s - paralleled by the **Black Horse of Revelation chapter 6**), for its tolerance of those who held to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. Jesus spoke to this church

as He Who, "*has the sharp, double-edged sword*". Referring to the ***Sword of the Spirit*** or the Bible, it reproves of sin and convicts of judgment, yet builds-up the repentant, pointing the hearer to Christ's righteousness (Heb 4:12). Reproof was warranted, as among the church were those who, like the false prophet Balaam, devised "*stumbling blocks*" of sexual immorality and the consumption of foods offered to idols for the unsuspecting flock. The influence of the corrupt teachers, a combination of church and political leadership that established the throne of Satan (the *throne of iniquity*- Psalm 94:20, 21), brought an influx of pagan rites and doctrines that corrupted the pure gospel of salvation by grace through faith of Jesus Christ. The church was inundated with false converts to Christianity and the introduction of heresies to appease former pagans. One such doctrine was Sunday observance and its establishment through a **Sunday Law as of March 7, A.D.321**. Jesus provided strong counsel that the people repent of their sins lest He strike them with the sword of His mouth. To the faithful of Pergamum that upheld Christ's name, even to death in some cases, Jesus promised to give of the hidden manna to eat, preserved in the *Ark of the Covenant*. Jesus also promised each person a white stone, engraved with a name known only to the recipient. The stone and the unique name may symbolize an experience for which the bearer alone can account with Jesus Christ (Rev 2:12-17).

Thyatira, translated "odor of affliction", was a city of Asia Minor bordering Lydia and modern Turkey. This church

refers to the church of the **Dark Ages** (A.D.538-1798). During this era, God prepared a place in the wilderness for His true church that it should flee from [the apostate church system](#), called *Jezebel* in the letter (Rev 12:1, 6). Jesus appears to the church of Thyatira as One whose "*eyes [are] like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass*". This denotes God's perfect wisdom that searches the hearts of men (Psalm 139:1-24) and Jesus being He who passed through the fires of suffering and had been strengthened like fine brass. The faithful of this church are said to be strong, doing great exploits for the Kingdom of God despite the false prophetess Jezebel. She is said to have deceived many and caused them to compromise, committing [spiritual] fornication, and worshiping idols. The Apostle James wrote of the harlotries committed by the ruthless queen Jezebel in the Old Testament, a prophetic allusion to the same corrupt church system. God's forbearance towards the pagan queen were seen in the works of the prophet Elijah who, "*prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months*" (James 5:17). Similarly, God permitted *spiritual Jezebel*, the Papal See, time to "*repent of her fornication*" and to reign 3½ prophetic years (1,260 literal years) before receiving a "*deadly wound*". Given its trials in contending with spiritual Jezebel, Jesus offered no rebuke to this church, but rather encouragement that it continue in perseverance. To those who overcome, *sons of God*, it is given that they rule the nations with a rod of iron, co-reigning with Christ (Romans 8:14-17). Jesus also

offered Himself, the *Bright and Morning Star*, as their exceeding great reward (Revelation 2:18-29; Genesis 15:1)! **Sardis** was the capital city of Lydia, located in modern Turkey. Sardis represented the church of the *Protestant Reformation* (A.D.1500's-1844) that was given great light to dispel the extreme spiritual darkness of previous eras (Isa 60:2). Jesus, Who has the Seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, has stern rebuke for this church that "*has a name, is alive, but is yet dead*". God progressively raised men of faith such as Wycliffe, Huss, Jerome, Zwingli, and Martin Luther that were empowered by the Holy Spirit to shine light upon the authority of the Bible and hidden truths of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The Spirit's desire to lead His people into all truth, uncovering the fallacies and corruptions of previous eras was however, stifled by men's rejection of His gathering message (see [2520](#)) found in the [First Angel's Message](#). Having no true desire to see Jesus due to worldliness, content with their station in the present world, Protestants en masse turned their backs to further light. Jesus chastised this practice stating, "*I have not found thy works perfect before God... hold fast, and repent*." Jesus also saw among the church those who had not defiled their garments and to them He promised white [garments], His righteousness, and to walk with Him. He also promised not to blot their names from the *Book of Life*, but that He would confess them before His Father and the angels (Rev 3:1-6).

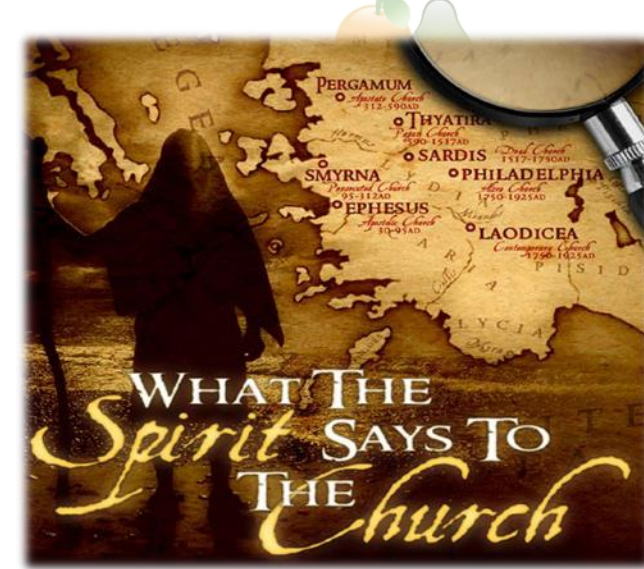
Philadelphia, meaning "Brotherly Love", this church depicts the *Advent Movement*, raised-up by God (A.D.1842-1863) to

rebuild the temple of the Lord, and to restore paths of the just. Arising as the *first fruits* of righteousness, the faithful, who were gathered out of the contemporaneous church, **Sardis**, would eventually enter covenant with God as His *Last Day* remnant people. The prophet Isaiah typified and likened the Church of Philadelphia to Him, Who is as a nail fastened to a sure place, and to Whom would be given the key to the house of David (Isaiah 22:20-25). In other words, this church and its offspring movement would become **the spiritual successors to the House of Israel**. The 46-years that would encompass the church of Philadelphia's ministry (1798-1844) marked the rebuilding of God's *Spiritual House* (John 2:19-21, 1 Peter 2:4-9). As John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah in the time of Christ's first advent, so this church was appointed the particular task of heralding the day of the *Lord's Judgment*, shown in the **First and Second Angel's Messages** (Malachi 3:1-4). To this church, Jesus presented Himself as "*He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth and shutteth, and no man openeth*". The opened door presented is the way into the Holiest of Holies in heaven which by faith, the few members of this church would follow Jesus into in the fall of A.D.1844 (Rev 11:19). Jesus offered no rebuke to this faithful church, serving as pioneers for God's *Last Day remnant* church (Revelation 12:17). To them was promised rest, deliverance from the "*hour of temptation*", or the perilous **Time of Trouble**, soon to befall the earth (Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:5-7).

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The Seven Churches of the Revelation

Supplemental Study 11 [Based on Revelation 2:1-3:22]



Lesson 44