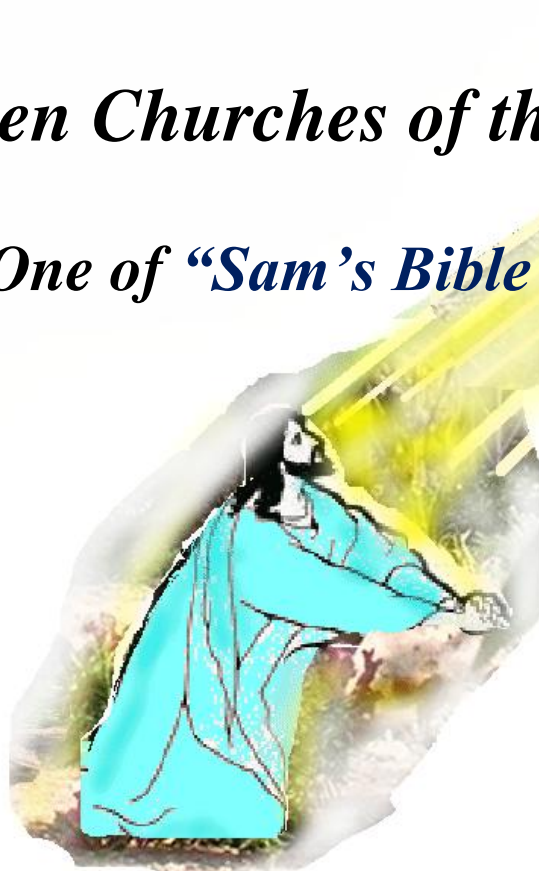


The Seven Churches of the Revelation

The Seven Churches of the Revelation

One of “Sam’s Bible Tool”



Sam Johnson

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This Bible tool is NOT intended to be a substitute for studying the Bible.

Introduction

Purpose: This Bible Tool is intended to simply provide the information provided in these messages in a straight-forward manner and format. Topics for my Bible Tools are selected with which I, myself, am not adequately familiar. Thus, creating these tools is study by me, for myself, in addition to what benefit they may provide others, like you.

Construct”: These discussions are based on and directly derived from Jesus Christ’s Seven Letters to the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelation Chapters 2 & 3. As I discuss them, the discussion for each letter consists of four parts:

1. **Scripture:** The text of the letter from the Book of Revelation
2. **Potential Factors:** What factors did Jesus potentially consider when making his comments about the respective churches?
3. **Summary:** A wrap-up, very simple description, in the form of a small table, of the letter and the influencing factors.
4. **Background Information:** Information about the church, the city and other aspects pertinent to the environment at the time and since

“User Friendliness”: A goal of this project is to present this material as simply as possible while conveying a clear understanding of the seven letters. This project is 39 pages. I strongly recommend you read or study it one letter at a time. I believe you will find this improves your ability to retain the information.

I have never seen this format before, although, admittedly, I am hardly a student of Biblical literature. My intent for simplicity in this tool is to help believers come to a more complete understanding through their own, personal study of these affirmations of the importance of complete

obedience to God's commands and warnings against those who are not doing so.

I truly hope this Bible Tool will be of value to you in your search for the truth.

Notes:

1. Texts are from the NIV.
2. A larger than normal font is used upon request of Bible Tools users.
3. Pictures and much of the geographic text are from <http://www.BiblePlaces.com>. Other sources are cited in footnotes.
4. All Scriptural text is from <http://www.BibleGateway.com> (NIV).
5. The Table of Contents is "hyperlinked" to the major sections of the document. In Microsoft Word, you can follow hyperlinks by pressing the { Ctrl } button while clicking on the link with your mouse button.
6. It is strongly recommended that you read the letters one at a time; e.g., one each sitting. The sections are only 4 or 5 pages specifically for this purpose.

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Locations of the Seven Churches

The red stars indicate the locations of the seven churches. All are in western Turkey. An ellipse surrounds this area. *This ellipse is shown in each section for the letters to the seven churches indicating where that particular church is.*

On this larger map, the areas of other New Testament churches are shown for information.

Within the ellipse, the seven churches fall in clockwise order. Whether this is significant or just coincidence is completely unknown.



The Seven Churches of the Revelation

Part II: The Letters to the Seven Churches

Introduction to Part II: +

A. The Revelation:

In Revelation chapters 2 & 3, Jesus Christ, Himself, gave the Apostle John messages John was to deliver to the seven specific churches. Jesus Christ, himself, spoke to the Apostle John, who delivered those words to those churches in this letter ([Revelation 1:4](#)).

“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.”

([Revelation 1:11](#))

B. The Seven Spirits:

Why are seven churches singled out; as opposed to seventeen or six, etc.? The answer is strongly implied in His letter to the church at Ephesus:

“These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands.”

([Revelation 2:1](#))

Many Bible scholars agree the seven stars represent seven angels (who might actually be the elder(s)) for the church in each location and the seven lamp stands represent the churches themselves. If this is the case, note that ***Christ “walks among the seven lamp stands”!***

The Seven Churches of the Revelation

Isaiah 11:2 speaks of the coming of Christ and mentions the Spirit that would be upon Him. The Holy Spirit is presented in seven manifestations of His character and ministry. *They are:*

- 1. The spirit of the Lord*
- 2. The spirit of wisdom*
- 3. The spirit of understanding*
- 4. The spirit of counsel*
- 5. The spirit of might*
- 6. The spirit of knowledge*
- 7. The spirit of the fear of the Lord*

[1 Corinthians 12:4](#) says there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit delivers them. When Christ says "I am He who has the seven Spirits of God", He is talking about the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This is also made manifest in Rev. 4:5:

From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing.

These are the seven spirits of God.

A diversity of gifts makes clear these letters are not intended solely for the seven churches, they are universally applicable to all who are encapsulated in the lamp stands of Jesus' church.

The words of these Scripture quotations are directly from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

To the Church in

Ephesus



Scripture:

2¹ “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2

I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

To the Church in

Ephesus



Potential Factors¹:

The Ephesian church represents the first century after Christ. The Church had grown into a force to be reckoned with, and Christianity was starting to challenge the religions and ideological institutions of the day.

The apostle Paul remained in Ephesus for more than two years on his third major journey, and his preaching led to a major conflict between the Gospel and the worship of Diana. This preaching turned many away from idol worship, upsetting silversmiths who specialized in the manufacture of idols²

The great pagan religions were set up by Satan to counterfeit the plan of salvation and to deny access to the world's Redeemer. It has always been Satan's strategy to either force or deceive people to accept the counterfeit rather than the true.

In Ephesus, Christianity struck a blow to the worship of Diana, the Mother of the gods. It is noteworthy that the modern-day equivalent, the worship of Mary as the mother of God, finds its root in Ephesus. In 451 AD, at the Council of Ephesus, the Roman Catholic Church bequeathed the title "Mother of God" to Mary, thus reviving the ancient cult in a modern garb.

¹ <http://www.bibleplaces.com> (see "Prophecy" sections)

² Acts 19:26

To the Church in

Ephesus



Summary of the Letter to the Church at Ephesus

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Ephesus	First or desirable	Era of warning love	Patient, hate deeds of false teachers, did not faint or give up	Left your first love	Repent, do again your 1st works	Eat of Tree of Life	To 100 AD

Background information:



A gladiator arena in Ephesus.
Merchants rioted against Paul here.
(Acts 19:23-41)

Ephesus was a center of travel and commerce on the east coast of the Aegean Sea o the coast of western Turkey. It was one of the greatest seaports of the ancient world.

Originally holding 25,000 people, this theater was built in the Hellenistic period and was renovated by several Roman emperors. Designed for theatrical performances, later alterations allowed gladiatorial contests to be held here. When Paul was accused of hurting the Artemis and her temple, the mob gathered together in this theater (Acts 19:23-41).

To the Church in

Ephesus



Considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, Ephesus' Temple of Artemis was dedicated to the goddess of the hunt. Only the foundation and one column remains of this temple which once measured 425 feet long, 220 feet wide and 60 feet high.



Paul's successful ministry in this city was considered a threat to this very temple (Acts 19:27).

Commercial Agora

This market area is known as the "Square Agora" because of its dimensions 360 feet square. It arose in the Hellenistic period and was surrounded on all sides by arched shops about 40 feet deep. It is located next to the harbor and was the city's main commercial center.



It is quite possible that Paul worked here with Priscilla and Aquila in their tent-making business.

To the Church in

Smyrna



Scripture:

⁸ “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. ⁹ I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

¹¹ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Potential Factors:

These words were fulfilled, for during this period, the most vicious persecutions occurred against the Christians. In 107 AD, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch in Syria and a friend of John the apostle, was thrown to the lions and eaten alive in the amphitheatre of Rome.

To the Church in

Smyrna



In 155 AD, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and a close friend of Ignatius, was killed by the sword, his body burned at the stake in Smyrna.

It was through the witness of Christian martyrs that Tertullian of Carthage, in Africa, was converted to Christianity at the age of 30, and thereafter became a defender of the Christian faith.

This period of persecution came to its climax under Diocletian, who, in 303 AD, launched a vicious, empire-wide effort for the complete annihilation of Christianity. Although he died in 305 AD, the persecution continued until it was finally brought to an end in 313 AD by the decree of toleration issued by Emperor Constantine.

The Diocletian persecution lasted ten years. **The ten-day tribulation predicted for this church (verse 10) coincides with this ten-year period when the day-year principle of Biblical prophecy is applied.** Persecution cleansed the Church by forcing Christians to consider whether they were truly willing to follow Christ in all circumstances.

In the ancient city of Smyrna, the most expensive homes were on the mountainsides that rose above the bay. This gave it the name "Crown City." We can appreciate the appropriateness of the promise, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life...He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the **second death**" (Revelation 2:10-11).

To the Church in

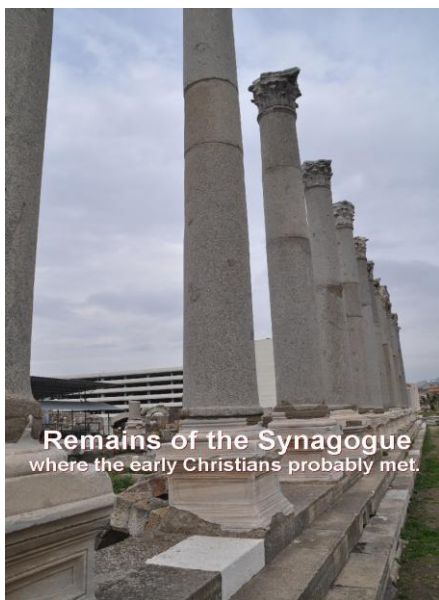
Smyrna



Summary of the Letter to the Church at Smyrna

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Smyrna	Myrrh or sweet fragrance	Persecution, suffering, martyrdom	Rich in faith and good works in spite of tribulation and hypocrites	NONE	Be faithful unto death	Receive crown of life, not be hurt of second death	To 313 AD

Background information:



Remains of the Synagogue
where the early Christians probably met.

Smyrna was the second city to receive a letter from John. Acts 19:10 suggests that the church there was founded during Paul's third missionary journey.

At the end of the first century, the church at Smyrna was facing the same kind of persecution Stephen had faced. Their persecution was coming from people who falsely claimed to be Jews (what the first Christians were called,

To the Church in

Smyrna



The letter to Smyrna contains no admonishment, and as the name implies, the sacrifice which Christians were called upon to make in this time period *actually* served to draw people to Christ (II2 Cor. 2:14-15).

To this church, many of whose members would actually suffer death by persecution, Jesus introduced Himself as "the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive" (Revelation 2:8). Then the words of the coming peril were given, "*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days*" (Rev. 2:10).



When John said that some will be thrown into prison he knew that Roman imprisonment was frequently a prelude to execution. He encouraged the believers to be faithful even unto death. In this persecution, John's own apprentice, Polycarp, was martyred here in AD 155. An example of John's warning and exhortation, he refused to blaspheme the Lord's name and was subsequently burned alive.

To the Church in

Pergamum



Scripture:

¹² “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. ¹³ I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

¹⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

To the Church in

Pergamum



Potential Factors:

The seeds of paganism were sown into Rome when King Attalus III had bequeathed his title *Pontifex Maximus*³ to the pagan Roman emperors in 133 BC.

The Pergamos period began in 313 AD and continued until 538 AD. It was during the Pergamos period when the Church adopted many pagan practices. This was a period of deteriorating moral standards and doctrinal corruption. Satan had failed to destroy the Church through persecution, so, instead, he endeavored to destroy her through compromise. Christian standards were lowered and a union was formed between Christianity and paganism.

In 322 Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, but kept the pagan title Pontifex Maximus. To unite his empire, in the early 300s, Emperor Constantine blended paganism and Christianity.

In 378 AD, Emperor Gratian⁴ refused the title Pontifex Maximus as unbecoming for a Christian. The Roman Catholic bishop then took the title upon himself, as the Catholic Church has done with many pagan sun worship symbols⁵. The church in Pergamos represents this historical period of compromise. In exchange for religious tolerance and acceptance, the true principles of Christianity were sacrificed to accommodate pagan beliefs.

By the end of 538 AD, Emperor Justinian decreed Christianity the official religion of the empire, joining church and state.

³ http://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception_Pontifex_Maximus_Babylon

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gratian,_Roman_emperor_of_the_West

⁵ http://amazingdiscoveries.org/S-deception_end-time_paganism_Catholic_sun-worship

To the Church in

Pergamum



There were those who sought to maintain the true faith. Foremost among them was Patrick, who, in the early years of the fifth century, established scores of churches out of which grew *the Celtic Church*. *This church held onto much of the true faith through the centuries of spiritual darkness that followed.*

The promise to the faithful of the Pergamos period was, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

The hidden manna is a reference to a new life in Christ. The white stone is probably a symbol of freedom from the slavery of sin, and the new name represents the character transformed through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Summary of the Letter to the Church at Pergamum

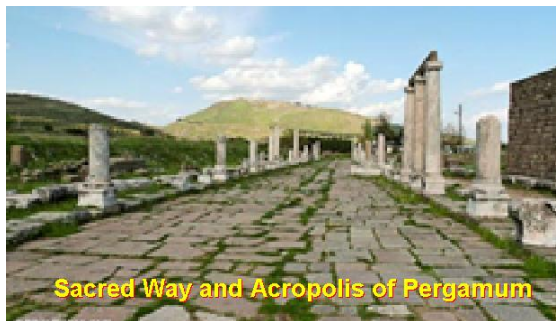
Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Pergamos	Height, power, or elevation by marriage	State religion, compromise	Held firm to Jesus' name and did not deny the faith	Tolerance of Nicolaitanes; Balaamism; compromise; idolatry; and immorality	Repent	Receive hidden manna, white stone, new name	To 538 AD

To the Church in

Pergamum



Background information:



Pergamum became the center of a large kingdom in the 3rd century BC and retained its status as a political and cultural leader into the Byzantine period. Its library was 2nd only Alexandria, holding over 200,000 volumes.

Whereas, the purpose of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, was religious activities, the Acropolis in Pergamum was for social and cultural activities, in other words, daily life. The acropolis rises 1300 feet above the lower city on the plain of the Caicus River.



Pergamum's name is derived from the fact that parchment was first made here. It was called by the Greeks Pergamene from the name of the city. The city of "Pergamos", previously known as Bergamo, was noted for its wickedness, insomuch as our Lord says, "Satan's seat" was there.

When persecution could not rid the earth of Christianity, Satan turned to deception and compromise.

The letter rebuked the church of Pergamos for fraternizing with those who held the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. It was

To the Church in

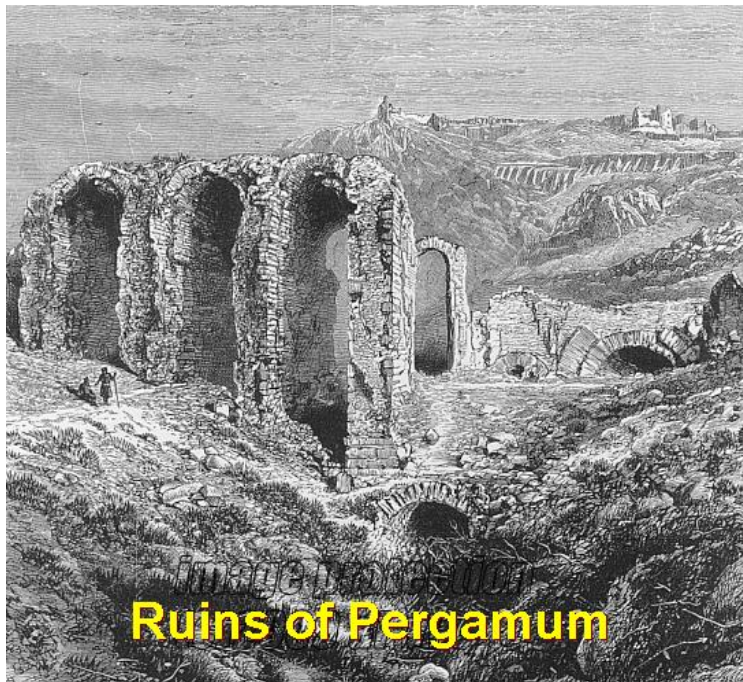
Pergamum



Balaam who led Israel to moral corruption, just before they were due to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land. The Nicolaitans, a heretical sect who compromised with the pagan cults, had been rejected by the Ephesian church but were courted by the church of Pergamos.

Thus, the church of Pergamos was rebuked for swerving from the truth and embracing the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes.

Antipas, Christ's "faithful martyr," here sealed his testimony with his blood.



At this regional seat of Rome, the governor had '*the power of the sword*' to determine life and death; and often used his power to have Christians tossed to their deaths in the mouths of wild beasts in Pergamum's arena. John reminded Christians of this powerful, pagan city that Jesus alone - not

the Roman governor - holds all power, including power of life and death over citizens of Pergamum and elsewhere.

To the Church in

Thyatira



Scripture:

18 “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets, ‘I will not impose any other burden on you, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.’

26 To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 27 that one ‘will rule

To the Church in

Thyatira



*them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’ — just as I have received authority from my Father.
28 I will also give that one the morning star. 29 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Potential Factors:

⁶Thyatira was a very active church. Christ said “I know all about your works .” He commended them for their works of love and service. Ministries that showed love: evangelism, needy, poor to name a few. He commends them for their works of faith and patient endurance. Ministries that demanded strong faith and endurance in order to carry them out. Facing opposition, persevering in ministry, being required to sacrifice time or money, to name a few. He commends them for the growth in the ministries of the church.

This was a church meeting all the needs of the community; it was full of activity and energy, crowded with people. Yet the church was a far cry from what it should be. It was a compromising and corrupted church. You say, but this church was doing all the right things or it seemed it was.

Christ charged this church with allowing a “Jezebel” to teach the church; a false prophetess who claimed that God had called and gifted her to teach and proclaim the truth. Because of this the

⁶ <http://www.revlu.com/RevThy.html>

To the Church in

Thyatira



church had appointed her as a teacher and gave her the right to teach in the church. And allowing her to spread her false teachings.

She was being allowed to seduce the Lord's servants. She was presenting reasonable arguments, deceiving, misleading, followers of the Lord, and the church was allowing it. She was also seducing the believers to commit fornication and all manner of immoral acts.

Summary of the Letter to the Church at Thyatira

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Thyatira	Sweet savor labor. Sacrifice of contrition	Dark Ages, apostasy	Love, faith, patience, and good works	Tolerance of Jezebel, idolatry, immorality	Hold fast what you already have	Power over nations, Morning Star	To 1560s AD

Background information:

Thyatira was a frontier town, probably the least important city of the Seven Churches of the Revelation and also the smallest.⁷ Thyatira was famous for its dyeing and was a center of the indigo trade. More such guilds are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman province of Asia.

⁷ <http://www.revluc.com/RevThy.html>

To the Church in

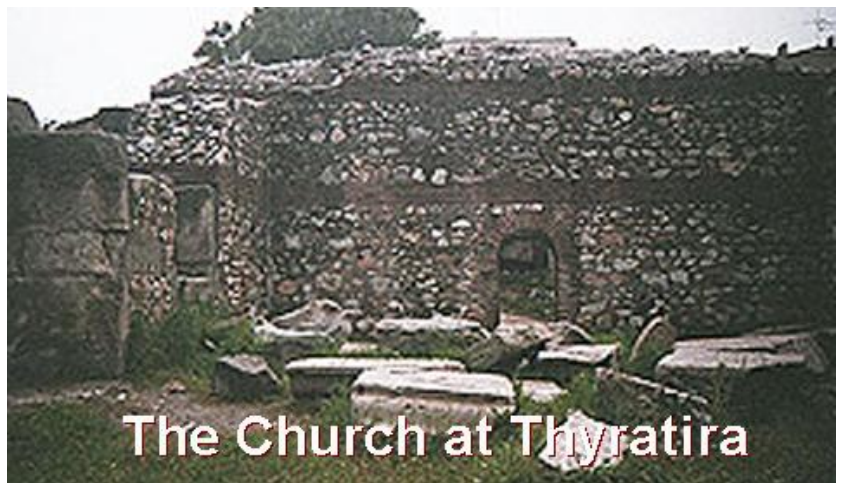
Thyatira



The Apostle Paul and Silas might have visited Thyatira during Paul's second or third journey, although the evidence is entirely circumstantial. They visited several small unnamed towns in the general vicinity during the second journey. While in Philippi, Paul and Silas stayed with a woman named Lydia from Thyatira, who continued to help them even after they were jailed and released.⁸

Thyatira was the city from which Lydia, the seller of purple came.

In early Christian times, Thyatira was home to a significant Christian church. Thyatira was the home of “Jezebel” who called herself a prophetess and taught and seduced the Christians of Thyatira to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.



Their social functions often involved a meal that was usually held within the temple precincts. The social included a sacrifice to the gods and usually ended up being a drunken immoral affair. The church knew the attraction of Jezebel's seductive teaching. Jezebel

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thyatira>

To the Church in

Thyatira



was teaching that believers could support the social functions of their trade unions, even if the function was worldly. Believers had to participate in the social and business functions in order to secure themselves land their jobs and in order to prosper. Lowering Christian holiness and morality was necessary in order to guarantee social acceptance and the survival of one's job or business. She taught that God would understand.

To the Church in

Sardis



Scripture:

3 “To the angel ^[6] of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. *I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.* ² Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. ³ Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

⁴ Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. ⁶ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in

Sardis



Potential Factors:

Christ's Nature Revealed To Sardis⁹

Christ's revealed a part of His nature to Sardis through the vision imparted to John in Revelation 1, He selected two characteristics - "seven spirits" and "seven stars." The seven spirits refer to the Holy Spirit and the stars refers to the angels of the churches. This church had more than adequate opportunity to know the truth and obey the Lord, but they had not. The natural explanation appears to be they preferred to trust the State in a time of economic need instead of God. If church leaders over the ages depended solely on the Holy Spirit instead of governmental authorities and leaders, would the church not have a far greater spiritual impact for millions more?

Summary of the Letter to the Church at Sardis

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Sardis	Those escaping or that which remains	Reform	A few are not defiled	Dead works	Watch, strengthen what remains, hold fast, repent	White raiment, keep name in Book of Life	To 1790s AD

⁹ <http://www.spiritjournals.com/Bible%20Studies/Revelation/Seven%20Churches/Sardis.htm>

To the Church in

Sardis



Background information:

Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire and one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. It was a town in western Asia Minor (Turkey), 50 miles east of Smyrna, and 30 miles southeast of Thyatira. It was formerly a capitol of Lydia, and became part of the Roman Empire in 129 BC. Paganism flourished in Sardis. The Christian community was small and weak, and a lot of them returned to their original religions.



The letter to the church of Sardis was the 5th written to the 7 churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. It proclaimed that the church of Sardis was dead, and told the Christians there to be watchful and to strengthen what remained of their community. The letter also said that there would be a few people in Sardis who will walk with Christ.¹⁰



The Acropolis

At the time of Christ, The Acropolis was known as the home of the church that received the fifth of letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation.

¹⁰ <http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com/s29.htm>

To the Church in

Philadelphia



Scripture:

⁷ “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸ I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹² The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name. ¹³ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To the Church in

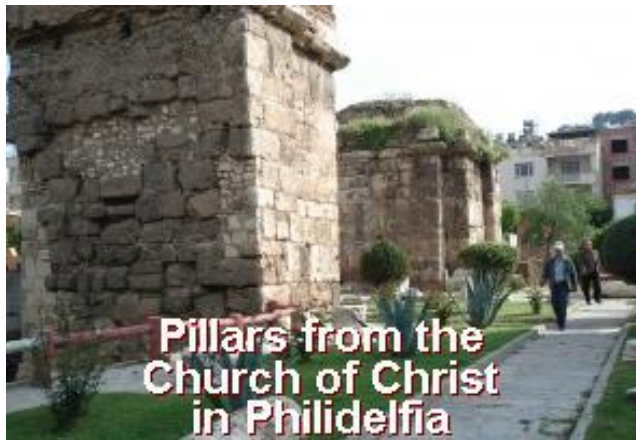
Philadelphia



Potential Factors:

Although several ancient cities bore the name of Philadelphia, this is definitely the one listed among the seven by John in the Book of Revelation. Philadelphia is the sixth of the seven churches.

According to Christ's letter to the church at Philadelphia, Christians were suffering persecution at the hands of the local Jews, whom Jesus calls "the synagogue of Satan". Frequent earthquakes may lie behind the reference to making her church a temple pillar. Permanency would have been important to the city's residents.



Philadelphia shares with Smyrna the distinction of receiving nothing but praise from Christ. This explains why modern Protestant churches sometimes use "Philadelphia" as a component in the local church's name as a way of emphasizing its faithfulness.

The letter to the church of Philadelphia is the 6th one written to the 7 churches in the Book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3, and it receives no reproach. Christ tells the church they have kept his word and have not denied his name, and the assembly of Satan will fall prostrate at their feet. Christ will keep them safe in the time of trial that is going to come to the whole world to test the inhabitants

To the Church in

Philadelphia



of the earth. The modern city of Alasehir is built over the ancient site.

Summary of the Letter to the Church at Philadelphia

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Philadelphia	Brotherly love	Revival, Gospel spread	Kept the Word and not denied Jesus	NONE	Hold fast to the faith	Pillar in temple, keep from hour of temptation Have name of God	To 1840s AD

Background information:

Philadelphia was established in 189 BC by King Eumenes II of Pergamon (197-160 BC). Eumenes II named the city for the love of his brother, who would be his successor, Attalus II (159-138 BC), whose loyalty earned him the nickname, "Philadelphos", literally meaning "one who loves his brother". The city is best known as the site of one of the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation.

Lacking an heir, Attalus III Philometer, the last of the Attalid kings of Pergamum, bequeathed his kingdom, including Philadelphia, to his Roman allies when he died in 133 BC. Rome established the

To the Church in

Philadelphia



province of Asia in 129 BC by combining Ionia and the former Kingdom of Pergamum.

In AD 17, Philadelphia suffered badly in an earthquake. The Roman emperor Tiberius relieved it of having to pay taxes and, in response, the city granted honors to Tiberius. Evidence from coinage reveals that Caligula also helped the city; under Vespasian, Philadelphia received his cognomen, Flavia. Under Caracalla, Philadelphia housed an imperial cult; its coins bore the word *Neokoron* (literally, "temple-sweeper"—caretaker of the temple). A small theater located at the northern edge of Toptepe Hill is all that remains of Roman Philadelphia.

Philadelphia was infamous for its textiles and leather products.

Philadelphia literally means "one who loves his brother" and is now known as Alaşehir.

To the Church in

Laodicea



Scripture:

¹⁴ “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. ¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

²¹ To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

To the Church in

Laodicea



Potential Factors

Laodicea is the only one of the seven churches of the Revelation that receives no commendation of any sort from Jesus. Jesus only has rebuke for them.¹¹ Many believe this represents the church of today.

¹²The Church of the Laodiceans is lukewarm. They only testify and obey the gospel when it's convenient. There is no passion. There is no commitment, (see II Timothy 1:12). They believe that gain is godliness, (I Timothy 6:5-6).

- II Timothy 1:12, “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that **he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him** against that day.”
- I Timothy 6:5-6, “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

The Church of the Laodiceans believe in a social gospel. God's church is no more than a social club to them. When persecution or trials appear they bail. Their faith is as flimsy as their commitment. They seem to think that they can fool God into thinking they've made a commitment when they haven't. They have unconfessed sin. They have not repented. They believe in a “give me gospel.”

¹¹ <http://www.slideshare.net/schumacr/seven-churches-laodicea>

¹² <http://jesus-connection.com/7churchesofrevelationslaodicea>

To the Church in

Laodicea



They have never repented of their sin. They don't believe their sins are that bad. All sin is that bad. Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life!

- James 5:1-3, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days."
- Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
- Luke 13:3, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
- Luke 13:5, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."
- Luke 5:32, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The Laodiceans have riches and think they do not need God. Consider Luke 12:16-21,

- "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully
- And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

To the Church in

Laodicea



- And he said, This will I do. I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.
- And I will say to my soul; Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.
- But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those be, which thou hast provided?
- *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Summary of the Letter to the Church at Laodicia:

Church	Meaning of Name	Main Feature of Time Period	Commendation	Reproof	Counsel	Reward Promised to the Overcomer	Period
Laodicea	Judging the people or a just people	Modern Christendom , the Church today	NONE	Lukewarm , spiritually poor, blind, and naked	Secure gold tried in fire, white raiment, eyesalve, be zealous, repent	Sit with Christ on His throne and eat with Him	To End

Background information:

- Laodicea was named for the wife of Syria’s Antiochus II, Laodice. “Laodicea” means “justice of the people”
- Laodicea was famous for its worship of Zeus, whose likeness was found on the city’s coins.

To the Church in

Laodicea



- Laodicea was a major commercial and administrative center, the richest city in the area. It was known for its banking, linen/wool industry.
- It was also well known for its pharmaceutical skills; it was the home of a world-famous medical center, famous for producing ointments for the eyes and medications for ears.
- Its populous was, on the whole, very well to do.
- The historian Tacitus wrote that, after an earthquake, they were able to build themselves back without Rome's help. When the city was destroyed in 60 A.D., Laodicea refused help from the Roman government, even when all of the neighboring cities gladly accepted Rome's aid.
- Evidently, Paul had previously written a letter to the church at Laodicea and they had also written to him. (Col 4:16)

Col. 4:15-16: ¹⁵ *Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.*

¹⁶ *After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.*

Unfortunately, these letters were not preserved for us.

- The weakness of Laodicea was its water supply. Water had to be piped in from far away, leaving the city vulnerable to attacks in times of war. Six miles in one direction, the city of Hierapolis had mineral springs which were useful for medicinal baths. Six miles in another direction, the springs of

To the Church in

Laodicea



Denizli produced refreshing icy cold water. But by the time the water from Hierapolis spewed over the cliffs facing Laodicea, it had lost its heat, and was merely poisonous, useless water. Likewise, by the time the spring water reached Laodicea through the stone pipes, it was no longer cold and was far from refreshing.

- The politicians of Laodicea were specialists in diplomacy.
- Laodicea is now a deserted locale and called by the Turks, “old castle”.

To the Seven Church of the Revelation



Part III: Summary:

Observations concerning the Seven Letters:

1. Christ does not say TRY to repent, nor repent for a WHILE, nor try to do better, Christ says REPENT!! True repentance is not temporary, nor anecdotal, nor for a special case, repentance is putting away that sin forever; NEVER doing it again.
2. These letters are to the Angels of His churches. This is generally interpreted to be the pastors of those churches, not the individual members, However, the entire church was admonished to *listen to what the Spirit of God in Jesus Christ was saying* (example: Ephesus 2:7). The fact that hearing rather than reading is emphasized infers that Revelation was designed to be read in public worship. The churches were to listen to "what the *Spirit* says to the churches" (2:7). Yet, it is the Christ who is pictured as speaking in these letters. Christ and the Spirit are clearly equated. When the Spirit speaks, it is Christ speaking.
3. Where the named sins do not involve some, Christ singles them out and separates the faithful from the sinners. Then He unequivocally states what will happen to the FORMERLY faithful:
4. Each of the letters to the seven churches is introduced with Christ's assertion, "*I know...*" (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). *Christ is perfectly aware of (our) the distresses and persecution* the

To the Seven Church of the Revelation



church members may be suffering. *He also knows what they have achieved and where they have failed in their faithfulness* to him.¹³

5. In the opening letter to the church at Ephesus, Christ is pictured as walking among *the seven lampstands, which represent the seven churches* (1:20-2:1). This tells us *He is the leader of the church* and its Savior (John 10:28). This may be an allusion to Genesis 3:8, where the Lord is walking in the Garden of Eden with the man and woman he had created. We are to understand in each case that the Lord seeks a personal relationship with his people, and desires to interact with them and be their guide.¹⁴
6. We need to look again at what Jezebel was getting away with at Thyatira. The question is asked "How could such teaching be allowed within the church ?" The teaching was done very subtly. This type of teaching has continued on down through the centuries, so much so that it now infiltrates many churches today. This is basically what she was teaching:
 - a. Believers could not separate themselves from the world without becoming exclusive and snobbish.
 - b. Believers needed to be sensible in dealing with the world, they needed participate in some of the world's functions in order to be friendly, keep their jobs, secure promotions, help their businesses, keep from being considered fanatical, and win the lost.

¹³ <http://www.gci.org/bible/rev/ephesus>

¹⁴ ibid

To the Seven Church of the Revelation



- c. Believers could reach the world more easily by associating and fellow-shipping with the world. She was teaching that if a person really worshipped God, he would be acceptable to God even if he did not know about Jesus Christ. She taught that Jesus is not the only way to God, He is not the only Savior. We are hearing those very same things being taught today.
- d. Believers should attend the social functions of neighbors and fellow workers and not be exclusive and separatists. She was also seducing believers to commit idolatry. Some of the believers were participating in giving thanks to false gods.

An idol is anything that a person puts first in his or her life before God. It can be a job, money, family or power, just to name a few. Some church members were apparently putting their jobs and social acceptance before God. God has given this false teacher a period to repent. She knew deep down in her heart she was teaching contrary to God's Word, but she refused to change or repent.

The Solution for the Seven Churches and all mankind today:

- James 4:8-10, “**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you:** Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, **ye double minded**. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**”

To the Seven Church of the Revelation



The Judgment

John 3:19-21: ¹⁹ ***This is the verdict:***

Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

The Reward

- John 17:3, “And this is life eternal, that they might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

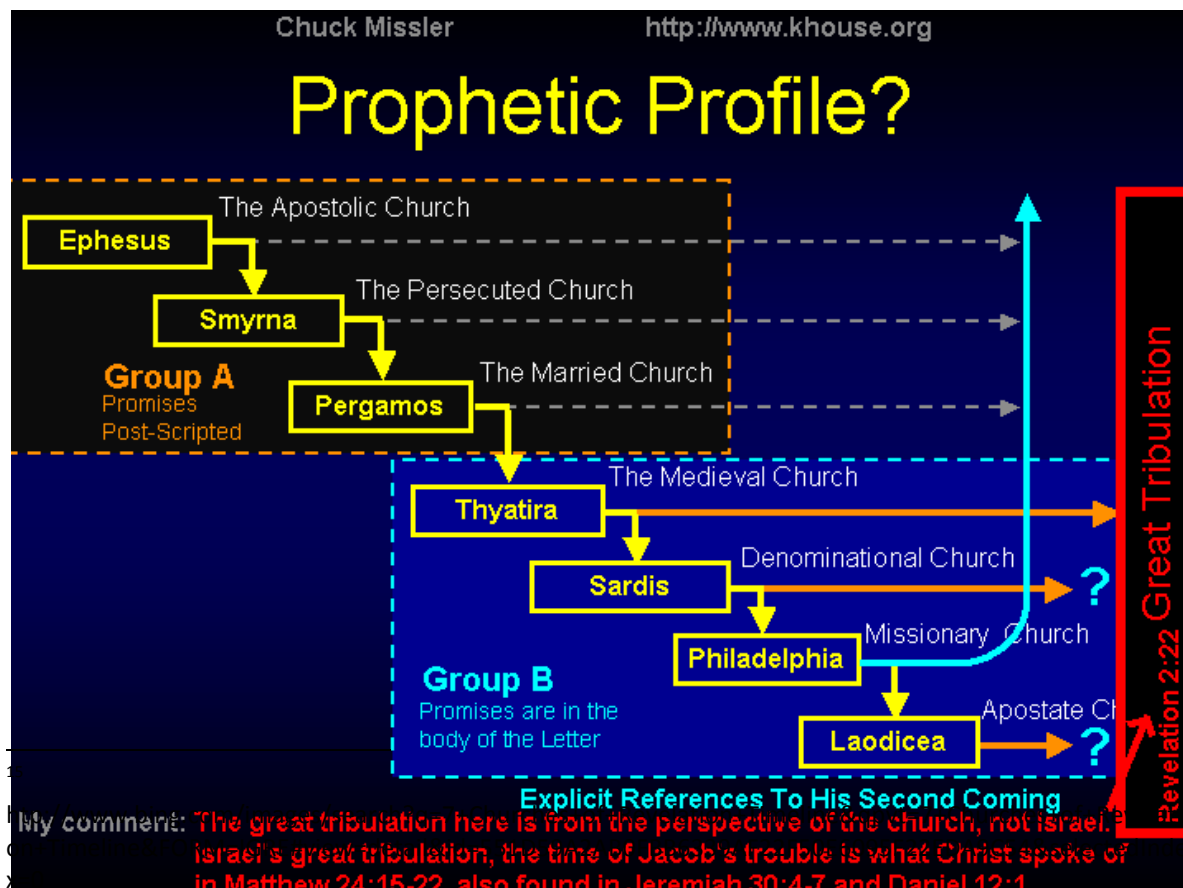
Those who repent, confess Jesus and humble themselves in baptism, as commanded in Acts 2:38, and commit their lives to him in true and complete faithfulness will sit with Jesus at His wedding feast. The greatest riches in the universe are found at the throne of God.

To the Seven Church of the Revelation



Epilog

Virtually all Bible scholars agree that the Seven Churches of the Revelation represent the future of the church on this earth up until Christ's Second Coming. This is illustrated very well in this graphic from Chuck Missler:¹⁵ It is self-explanatory to the extent of the purposes of this Bible Tool. For additional reading, see the Missler website at: <http://www.khouse.org>.



*To the Seven Church of the
Revelation*



“Here I am!

I stand at the door and knock.

If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,

I will come in...”¹⁶

¹⁶ Revelation 3:19-21