

## Revelations

### Lesson II

#### Chapters 2-3

#### Introduction

1. There were seven literal churches in Asia Minor.

**Note:** Discuss the location of these churches.

i. They are in Asia Minor

ii. The area we call Turkey is also known as Asia Minor with the exception of the small area that is in Europe.

iii. This area is also called Anatolia Peninsula

2. These churches named in chapters 2 and 3 also represent 7 dispensations of time beginning with the Apostolic church and ending with the rapture.

3. In this lesson, we will show

a. Problems in each church compared to the church age, or dispensation of time

b. Promises to those who overcome

c. Promises to those who disobey

d. Where we are in this last age.

#### I. Seven dispensations of Time

A. Seven churches were used because seven signifies Divine completion.

B. It is possible that these seven churches were used because their characteristics were so conspicuous

1. Open to the view; obvious to the eye; easy to be seen; plainly visible; manifest; attracting the eye.

2. Easily recognized; clearly defined; notable; prominent; ; distinguished

#### C. General Comments

1. Some characteristics of these churches are found in all churches.
2. Each overriding characteristic describes in unmistakable detail and clearness a certain period of church history.
3. Let me make a four-fold application of these seven letters to the seven churches.
  - a. A letter was addressed to the local church.
  - b. That letter carries admonition to all churches in all times as tests reveal their true spiritual state in the sight of God
  - c. These letters also carry a personal note as each letter
    - i. Declares “he that hath an ear...”
    - ii. Presents a promise to him “that overcometh.”
  - d. These letters are prophetic as they reveal seven phases of the future spiritual history of the church from around 96 a.d. to the end of the church period.

II. Now, let us take a General look at the seven churches mentioned in chapter 2 and 3

A. 1<sup>st</sup>, let us observe the Chronological order of the seven periods of time represented by these churches.

1. The Ephesian period was from 70 a d. to 170 a d.
  - a. This is a period where there is warmth, love and labor for Christ.
  - b. During this period, we see some who begin to defect, or desert as there was a gradual cooling of their love.

**Note:** Everyone in the church did not lose their love, but enough of them did that it became a major characteristic of the church which was and is very noticeable.

- c. There was a false profession of some
  - d. There was an incoming of undue exaltations (adoration) of the clergy and church offices.
  - e. This is the church of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
  - f. This church lost its’ 1<sup>st</sup> love.
2. The Smyrna period is from around 170 a.d. to 312 a.d.

- a. This era is marked with martyrdom and a sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death.
- b. This period was also marked with further developments of defection in the establishments of castes (classes, social groups) and orders.
- c. This was a period of time of Judaizing propensities (tendencies) which caused further departures from the true simplicity of the gospel.
- d. This is the persecuted church of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

**Note:** Diocletian lived during this period, and under him the church went through eight years of horrible persecution.

### 3. The Pergamite period from 312 a.d. to 606 a.d.

- a. True faith disappeared more and more from view
- b. The clergy gradually form itself into a system
- c. The church unites with the world
- d. Spiritual Babylon begins to rear itself aloft.
- e. Pergamas means married
  - i. The church and state had a wedding
  - ii. The church was called the “State church.”

**Note:** Constantine was the emperor who brought about this union between church and state, and he decreed the adopting of pagan holiday in combination with Christian days to appease both pagan and Christian.

### 4. Thyatirian Period from 606 a.d. to 1500 a.d.

- a. This is the age of purple and glory
  - i. This is the period of corrupt priesthood
  - ii. This is a period where darkness prevailed.
- b. This period is known as the dark ages
- c. Thyatira’s literal meaning is “burning incense” or a continual sacrifice.

- i. Christ's power was denied
- ii. Ceremonies and rituals were installed
- iii. The church is called the "Papal Church."

5. The Sardis period is from 1500 a.d. to 1750 a.d.

- a. This is a period of separation from the world and a return to Christ.
- b. This is an age of freedom from
  - i. Baalism
  - ii. Nicolaitans
  - iii. Jezebel
- c. This is an age where there are not many worthy names.
- d. This age covers the spiritual lethargy (stupor, sluggishness) of the Protestants, centuries before the great evangelical movements of the last 100 years.

**Note:** The reference to the last 100 years refer to the 19th century, not the 20 century.

- e. Sardis is the "reformed church" or "rebirth," and the meaning of Sardis is "remnant" or "that which remains."

6. The Philadelphian era from 1750 a.d. to 1900 a.d.

- a. This period is marked by a closer adherence to the written word.
- b. There is a greater fraternity (organization, union) among Christians.
- c. This is a Missionary church
- d. This is a Revival church
- e. This is an ideal church
- f. This church is the church of brotherly love.

7. The Laodicean era is from 1900 a. d. until the rapture of the church.

- a. This church is a church of lukewarmness, self-sufficiency, empty profession, and false peace.

- b. This is the end-time church of apostasy  
(turning or falling away from true gospel teaching)
- c. This is the church that goes into the tribulation
- d. This is the church that makes Christ sick

B. Comments about these seven church periods and seven churches

1. Two churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia were only praised with no blame
2. Two churches, Sardis and Laodicea were only blamed with no praise.
  - a. There were a few faithful in Sardis
  - b. Jesus still loves the Laodiceans for He is knocking on their door.
3. Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira were praised and blamed in different degrees.
  - a. Ephesus was complimented on being sound in doctrine and works, but was denounced for being without fervent love.
  - b. Pergamos had good works, but tolerated false doctrine.
  - c. Thyatira was good in works, service, charity, faith, and patience, but she allowed Jezebel to teach and seduce Christ's servants.

C. Let us look at some of the distinguishing features of these church

1. Ephesus was orthodox or passionless (lost her first love)
2. Smyrna was poor in worldly goods, but rich in spiritual treasures.
3. Pergamas was true in faith, but false in discipline.
4. Thyatira was growing in serviceableness, but lenient full of error.
5. Sardis was mostly dead, but had a few who were alive unto God.
6. Philadelphia was active, but entering severe trials.
7. Laodicea was lukewarm and sickening.

D. Modern counterparts

1. Ephesus are those who are doctrinally sound, but without passion

2. Smyrna are those who are wretchedly poor, but they are rich
3. Pergamas are those who are steadfastly loyal, but tolerant of the false teachers
4. Thyatira are those who are constantly busy, but allow the church to be led astray with false doctrine
5. Sardis are those with a name that they are alive, but no good works.
6. Philadelphia are those who are numerically weak, but they have an open door
7. Laodicea are those who are fabulously rich, but they are poor and naked with eye sores

### III. Let us examine the churches.

#### A. Ephesus 70 a.d to 170 a.d

1. Let us notice some names for this church
  - a. Desirable one
  - b. Apostolic church

**Note:** This church started full of zeal and burning with love

- i. They lost their first love
  - ii. Why do churches, individuals, families, nations lose their first love?
  - iii. What are some of the causes involved in losing one's first love?
  - iv. What are some of the characteristics of having lost one's first love?
2. Let us observe the commendation
    - a. Their labor
    - b. Their patience
    - c. They cannot stand evil
    - d. They tested those who called themselves apostles, and found them to be liars.
    - e. They have not fainted

f. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

3. Condemnation... They lost their 1st love

4. Warning... Repent and do your first works over

5. Exhortation from Revelations 2:5

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

i. Does this indicate that a person can lose their relationship with God?

ii. Removing the candlestick indicate being removed from God's presence.

**Note** Ezekiel 18:20-28

i. KJV...

20) The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. 21) But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22) All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. 23) Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24) But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25) Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26) When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. 27) Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28) Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

ii. NLT...

20) The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their

own wickedness. 21) But if wicked people turn away from all their sins and begin to obey my decrees and do what is just and right, they will surely live and not die. 22) All their past sins will be forgotten, and they will live because of the righteous things they have done. 23) “Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign Lord. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live. 24) However, if righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and start doing sinful things and act like other sinners, should they be allowed to live? No, of course not! All their righteous acts will be forgotten, and they will die for their sins. 25) “Yet you say, ‘The Lord isn’t doing what’s right!’ Listen to me, O people of Israel. Am I the one not doing what’s right, or is it you? 26) When righteous people turn from their righteous behavior and start doing sinful things, they will die for it. Yes, they will die because of their sinful deeds. 27) And if wicked people turn from their wickedness, obey the law, and do what is just and right, they will save their lives. 28) They will live because they thought it over and decided to turn from their sins. Such people will not die.

## B. Smyrna (170 a.d-312 a.d.)

### 1. The meaning of the name

- a. Myrrh
- b. Myrrh, when crushed gives off a nice odor
- c. This church was a persecuted church, and in their persecution, they gave off a sweet odor before God.
- d. It is the persecuted church

### 2. Facts concerning this church

- a. This was an era of martyrdom
- b. There were 10 periods of persecution starting around 67 a.d. and continuing until 321 a.d., when Constantine became the emperor of Rome, and he united church and state which ushers in the Pergamos period.
- c. This church is poor in worldly goods, but it is rich in spiritual treasure.
- d. Note the commendations
  - i. You are faithful in tribulation
  - ii. You are faithful in poverty, but thou art rich

### 3. Now look at their exhortation from Revelations 2:10

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: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

### C. Pergamos (312 a.d.-606 a.d.)

#### 1. Facts about Pergamos

- a. The word means married
- b. The church and state had a wedding
- c. They were true in faith, but false in discipline
- d. This church was a licentious (immoral, shameless) church

#### 2. Commendation

- a. They are faithful even though they live where satan's seat is
- b. They hold His name fast
- c. They have not denied the faith

#### 3. Condemnation

- a. You have those who hold the Doctrine of Balaam
- b. You have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans

#### 4. Their exhortation is from Revelations 2:16

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

**Note:** Is there a danger of allowing people to be in place of influence and leadership who are not living according to God's word? What is the danger?

### D. Thyatira (606 a.d-1520 a.d)

#### 1. Facts about this church

- a. It is the church that burns incense
- b. It is the church of the dark ages or papal church

- c. Christ's power is denied and ceremonies and rituals were installed
- d. Christians became outlaws or outlawed as heretics and anyone following the Christian faith was put to death by the church.
- e. Those of the Roman Catholic church were excommunicated if they gave protection to Christians.

f. Example:

In 1641, in Ireland, about 150,000 protestants were killed by the Catholics

## 2. Commendation

- a. Their charity is good
- b. Their service is good
- c. Their faith is good
- d. Their patience and works are better at the last of this period than they were at the first of this period

**Note:** The reason their patience and works were better toward the end of this period is because the reformation period began toward the end of the Thyatira era

## 3. Condemnation

- a. They allowed Jezebel to teach, to seduce servants, to commit fornication, to eat things sacrificed to idols
- b. Jezebel was a literal woman, and she also represented the Catholic church.

## 4. Look at their exhortation in Revelations 2:22-25

22) Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23) And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24) But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25) But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

E. Sardis (1520 a.d-1750 a.d.)

### 1. Facts concerning this church

- a. They separated from Catholicism to Christ
- b. The remnant or that which remains refers to a few that is left after the persecution from the Catholic church.
- c. There were a few great names
  - i. People like Martin Luther, Calvin, Wycliffe, and John Huss
  - ii. They
    - 1) Preached justification by faith
    - 2) Braved the wrath of the woman Jezebel
    - 3) Rome has always been guilty of insults toward real Christianity, and they have killed more than Moscow.
      - a) Ancient Rome persecuted and killed Christians by the multiplied thousands.
      - b) Modern Rome still persecutes, kills, and jails Christian people in the countries where she dominates.

2. There are no commendations

3. Condemnation

- a. I have not found thy works perfect
- b. They were changing, but many still held to much of Rome's traditions.

4. Exhortation from Revelations 3:3-5

3) Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4) Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

F. Philadelphia (1750 a.d.-1900 a.d.)

1. Facts about this church

- a. It is a missionary church

- b. It is a church of brotherly love
- c. It is a revival church
- d. It is an ideal church

**Note:** Some of the great men during this period were: George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles G. Finney, and D. L. Moody, and during this period William Carey sailed to India as a missionary.

- 2. There was no condemnation
- 3. Commendation
  - a. They had a little strength
  - b. They kept His word
  - c. They have not denied His name
  - d. They kept the word of His patience
- 4. Exhortation in Revelations 3:9

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

#### G. Laodicean (1900 a.d -Rapture)

- 1. Facts about the church
  - a. It is the end time church
  - b. It is the tribulation church
  - c. It is the church that made Christ sick
- 2. There are no commendations for there is nothing good about this church
- 3. Condemnation
  - a. They are neither cold nor hot
  - b. They think you are something special

- c. They are wretched
- d. They are miserable
- e. They are poor
- f. They are blind
- g. They are naked
- h. They have excluded Christ from their midst.

4. Their exhortation is found in Revelations 3:18-20

18) I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

IV. Let us look at the Salutations to the churches and the promises given them

**Note:** In the salutation or greeting to each church, Jesus identifies Himself in part from the vision that John saw in chapter 1:11-18

A. Ephesus

1. 2:1

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2. 2:7

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

B. Smyrna

1. 2:8

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

2. 2:10...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

3. 2:11

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

#### C. Pergamos

1. 2:12

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

2. 2:17

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; 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.

#### D. Thyatira

1. 2:18

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

2. 2:26

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

3. 2:27

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

4. 2:28...And I will give him the morning star.

**Note:** In Revelation 22:16, we find that Jesus is “the bright and morning star.”

5. 2:29...He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

#### E. Sardis

1. 3:1

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven

Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works,

2. 3:5

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

3. 3:6... He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

#### F. Philadelphia

1. 3:7

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith 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;

2. 3:12

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

3. 3:13...He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

#### G. Ladoicea

1. 3:14

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

2. 3:21

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

3. 3:22...He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

#### V. General comments

##### A. There were two things that He said to all the churches

1. I know thy works

2. He that hath an ear let him hear

## B. Definition of Terms

### 1. Doctrine of the Nicolaitians

- a. They were the followers of Nicolas who some think was one of the seven men chosen in Acts 6, to wait on tables.
- b. Their doctrine
  - i. Christian freedom was placed above the moral law
  - ii. They felt that neither idolatry nor sensuality could harm those who were free in Christ.
  - iii. They taught in the community of wives.
  - iv. They felt it was alright to commit adultery
  - v. They taught that it was alright to eat thing offered to idols
  - vi. They mixed pagan rites with Christian ceremonies

**Note:** This doctrine was already present in the Ephesus church, or at the time John lived.

- vii. They taught that the clergy had all the voice and were rulers of the laity.

### 2. Doctrine of Balaam

- a. Balaam enticed God's people to eat thins sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication
- b. They preached or prophesied for money or gain
- c. They wanted pay, position, and prestige
- d. They deviated from God's will
- e. Today
  - i. They tolerate sin to have growth
  - ii. They tolerate sin to be popular
- f. The sin of the church was that they tolerated the doctrine of Balaam to be

present in their church.

### 3. Jezebel

- a. She was probably a literal woman
- b. She was a religious fanatic
- c. She claimed to be a prophetess
- d. She founded a school of free-loveism where impure intercourse of the sexes were reduced to a religious system.
- e. Free-loveism is antimonianism
  - i. This is where one believes that under the dispensation of the gospel, the moral law is of no use or obligation.
  - ii. They believe that faith alone is necessary for salvation

**Note:** They allowed the one who was transgressing to continue without rebuke.