

The Seven Churches in Revelation 2 & 3

AD 90 AD 167 The first generation after Apostolic Age. Acts 20:29, 30

Ephesus

Rev. 2:1-7 (means “desirable”) but first love left

AD 167 AD 313 The church has always been persecuted, but this is the peak of universal persecution of the church of God.

Smyrna

Rev. 2:8-11 (means “bitter taste”) The persecuted church

AD 313 AD 580

Pergamos

Rev. 2:12-17 (means “mixed marriage”) The world and the church joined in marriage. 2 Cor. 6:14

AD 580

Thyatira

Rev. 2:18-29
(means “continual sacrifice”)

The pagan church—Roman Catholicism

AD 1529

Sardis

Rev. 3:1-6
(means “escaping”)

The formal coldness that
the Reformation sank into.
Became Protestantism

AD 1827

Philadelphia

Rev. 3:7-13
(means “brotherly love”)

Return to Christ
the Center
2 Tim. 2:19-22

AD 1848

Laodicea

Rev. 3:14-22 (means
“the people’s rights”)

Independency, a man
- centric ecclesiology
2 Tim. 3:1-8

Basic Outline of Each Letter

1. The way the Lord presents Himself to the church
2. Commendation - His approval (none to Laodicea)
3. Criticisms of the Lord (none to Smyrna and Philadelphia)
4. Promise to the overcomer
5. Call to hearing ear

The last four churches have the Lord’s coming presented as their object and hope, indicating that these churches would continue until the Rapture.

Note the progression of the Nicolaitans: the rise of the clergy / laity system borrowed in principle from the Jewish camp. Rev. 2:6 & 15. Also note “those that say they are Jews and are not” Rev. 2:9; 3:9, indicative of a covenantal method of Bible interpretation that merges Israel and the Church.

Three Ways to Apply the Seven Churches of Revelation 2 & 3

1. HISTORICAL: an account of what was happening in each one of these assemblies at the time that John wrote.
2. PROPHETIC: of the history of Christendom from the time that John wrote until the Rapture. Note: Rev. 1:3 says the entire book is a prophecy, therefore although there may have been a historical application, the primary intention of the Spirit must be prophetic.
3. PRACTICAL: a moral application to any individual or assembly at any time whose state corresponds to the address.

The Rapture

Middle of the Week

Her End