

The Seven Churches of Rev 2-3

Ephesus – Rev 2:1-7

Universal Church: The Apostolic Church - Rev 2:2-3

Historic-Prophetic Church: Lost Your First Love - Pentecost 33AD – Death of the last Apostle 100AD

Historic Church: "Ephesus" is the most important city of Asia at the mouth of the Cayster River, an important commercial and export center for Asia. Chartered as a free city by Rome. Contained temples to three Roman emperors. The Temple of Artemis (Diana) was four times the size of the Parthenon of Athens and considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Famous Christians who lived and ministered there include Aquila and Priscilla, Paul (Acts 19:8-10), Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3), and the Apostle John (Eusebius, *Church History* 5.8.4).

- **Characteristic:** Vs 1 - Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs 2-3 – “I Know You...” – Perseverance, Don’t tolerate evil men, Call out false apostles, Endured for the name of Christ, Not grown weary
- **Condemnation:** Vs 4 – “I Have This Against You...” – You left your first love
- **Command:** Vs 5 – Remember where you have come from, Repent, Do the deeds you did at first
- **Commitment:** Vs 5b – Repent, OR I will remove your lampstand

What does He mean by “he who overcomes”? *nikao – to win in the face of obstacles*

- John 16:33; Rom 12:21; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4-5; Rev 12:11; Rev 15:2
- Contrast with Rev 21:7-8

Smyrna – Rev 2:8-11

Universal Church: The Persecuted Church – Rev 2:10

Historic- Prophetic Church: Persecuted - 100 AD – Constantine 313 AD

(There were ten edicts sent by ten Emperors regarding the persecution of the Church during this time: Nero, AD 54; Domitian, AD 81; Trajan, AD 98; Adrian, AD 117; Septimius Severus, AD 193; Maximin, AD 235; Decius, AD 249; Valerian, AD 254; Aurelian, AD 270; Diocletian, AD 284)

Historic Church: "Smyrna" is the only one of the seven cities still lived in -- modern Izmir. This beautiful, proud city was larger than Ephesus, with a population of about 200,000. Its strong allegiance to Rome resulted in great persecution for Christians. In Smyrna, Bishop Polycarp was burned at the stake for his faith in 155 AD.

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 8 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs. 9 – “I Know You...” – Persecution, poverty, blasphemed by those who say they are Jews but are not
- **Condemnation:** Nothing
- **Command:** Vs. 10 – Do not be afraid, Be faithful unto death
- **Commitment:** Vs. 10b – I will give you a crown of life

Pergamum - Rev 2:12-17

Universal Church: The Compromising Church – Rev 2:16

Historic-Prophetic Church: Worldly - Constantine 313 AD – Pope Boniface 606AD

- Growing Corruption for Power
- Doctrinal Shifts

Historic Church: "Pergamum" was the at one time the capital city of Asia, built atop a 1000-foot cone-shaped hill. It was a center of worship of the pagan gods Zeus, Athene, Dionysis, and Asklepios. In 29 BC, the first temple dedicated to a living emperor was built there.

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 12 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs. 13 – “I Know You...” – You hold fast to my name, and you didn’t deny the faith
- **Condemnation:** Vs. 14-15 – “I Have This Against You...” – Some of you however, have sold out to the world. Like Balaam, you have compromised into idolatry
- **Command:** Vs. 16 - Repent
- **Commitment:** Vs. 16b – Repent or I will make war against you and kill you with the sword

Thyatira - Rev 2:18-29

Universal Church: The Pagan Church – Rev 2:20

Historic-Prophetic Church: Like Jezebel – Roman Catholic Church – The Dark/Middle Ages 606 AD – 1517 AD (Luther’s 95 Theses)

- Rampant Corruption
- False Doctrine
- Idol Worship

Historic Church: "Thyatira" was a center for manufacture and marketing, the home of Paul's benefactor Lydia, who was a seller of purple goods (Acts 16:14). Thyatira's numerous trade guilds were inseparably entwined with pagan religious observances posing a special problem for both the spiritual and economic well-being of Christians.

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 18 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs 19 – “I Know You...” – Your deeds, love, faith, perseverance is greater towards the end than at the first.
- **Condemnation:** Vs. 20 – “I Have This Against You...” – You tolerate false teachers like Jezebel, leading people astray into immorality and idolatry
- **Command:** Vs. 24 – For those who have not followed the false teachers, hold fast
- **Commitment:** Vs. 21-22 – God has given them time to repent and they did not. They will suffer under a sickness, your children will die from disease (The Black Plague 1346-1352)

Sardis - Rev 3:1-6

Universal Church: The Sleeping Church – Rev 3:2

Historic-Prophetic Church: Deadness - The Reformation Church 1517 AD – 1750 AD (Industrial Revo.)

- Lulled to Sleep by Error and False Teaching
- A Few men willing to wake up the Church – Luther, Zwingly, Calvin

Historic Church: "Sardis," once a powerful city, had declined greatly by the time John was writing. Yet it was still rich and famous, lying at the western end of a great caravan route from Susa in Mesopotamia. The Sardis church receives the most severe denunciation of the seven; it was "a perfect model of inoffensive Christianity" (Caird). The majority had so fully compromised with the pagan environment that the church was Christian in name only (that is, "nominally" Christian).

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 1 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs. 4 – A few people are faithful, most are not
- **Condemnation:** Vs. 1 - "I Have This Against You..." – You are alive in name only, you are dead.
- **Command:** Vs. 2-3 – Wake up, strengthen yourself, remember God's Word, repent
- **Commitment:** Vs. 3 – If you don't wake up, I will come for you like a thief

Philadelphia - Rev 3:7-13

Universal Church: The Enduring Church – Rev 3:10

Historic-Prophetic Church: Missions - The Missionary Church 1750 AD – 1859's AD

- Faithful and Gospel Centered

Historic Church: "Philadelphia" (modern Alashehir) is named by the Greek word for "brotherly love." On a major trade route, its economy was based on agriculture and industry. It was remarkable for its many temples and religious festivals, with the worship of Dionysis as its chief pagan cult. Earthquakes had often devastated the city.

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 7 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** Vs. 8 – "I Know You..." – they follow God, they keep His word, They don't deny His name – Evangelistic church, Revival church
- **Condemnation:** "I Have This Against You..." - Nothing
- **Command:** Vs. 11 – Hold fast to what you have, keep evangelizing, sending missionaries, revivals, etc.
- **Commitment:** Vs 9-10 – Because of your faithfulness, God will keep you from end-time Judgment

Laodicea – Rev 3:14-22

Universal Church: The Lukewarm Church – Rev 3:16

Historic-Prophetic Church: Apostacy – 1859 - The Present Day Church

- The Wealthy Church
- Rich with stuff but Poor on Conviction
- Compromise truth for popularity, easily distracted

Historic Church: "Laodicea" (modern Eski-hisar) was the wealthiest city in Phrygia. The area was famous for manufacture of clothing from soft, glossy black wool, a banking industry, and a medical school. One of its best known medicines was an eye salve made from "Phrygian powder" mixed with oil. Laodicea's water supply, drawn from the hot springs to the south, was still lukewarm after flowing for 5 miles in stone pipes -- unlike the cold water which refreshed their neighbors at Colossae, or the hot water whose healing properties were valued by those of Hierapolis (Bruce, Mounce, Beale).

- **Characteristic:** Vs. 14 – Description of Jesus
- **Commendation:** "I Know You..." - Nothing
- **Condemnation:** Vs. 15-17- "I Have This Against You..." - You are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. You are wealthy and say you need nothing, however you are wretched, naked, blind, and poor.
- **Command:** Vs 18- 19 – Repent, Get your riches from God not the world, cloth yourself with Christ, let Him heal you spiritual blindness,
- **Commitment:** Vs 20 – Jesus is calling. If you respond to Him, you will have true peace and fellowship with the Lord

Rev 2-3 – Church History Breakdown

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| Ephesus – Apostolic Church | 33 (Pentecost) – 100 (The Last of the Church Fathers is dead) |
| Smyrna – Persecuted Church | 100 (Last Church Fathers dies) – 313 (Christianity is Legal) |
| Pergamum – Compromising Church | 313 (Christianity is Legal) – 606 (Dark Ages) |
| Thyatira – Pagan Church | 606 (Dark Ages) – 1517 (Reformation – Luther 95 theses) |
| Sardis – Sleepy Church | 1517 (Reformation) – 1750 (Start of the Industrial Revolution) |
| Philadelphia – Missionary Church | 1750 (Industrial Revolution) – 1859 (Origin of the Species) |
| Laodicea – Worldly Church | 1859 – Present Day |