

## Overview of the Seven Churches

### GENERAL INFORMATION

- (1) **Recipients:** The entire book of Revelation was specifically written to seven local churches in the 1st century A.D. (1:4, 11; 2-3; 22:16).
- (2) **Benefits:** The entire book of Revelation was generally written to anyone who will hear and obey its message (1:3; 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; 13:9; 22:12,14,17-19; etc.).
- (3) **Focus:** Chapters 2 and 3 expose the good and the bad of seven individual, local churches, that existed at the end of in the 1st century A.D. Their messages are to be taken contextually, grammatically, historically, culturally and literally (unless a figure of speech is clearly revealed).
- (4) **Clarification:** The words "church" or "churches" appear 20 times in the entire book of Revelation, only referring to one or all of the seven specified churches that existed at the time of its writing, never to the church universal.
- (5) **Purpose:** The specific and powerful messages of chapters 2 and 3 in the book of Revelation apply to the seven literal churches of that day. We believers of the 21st century are reading and benefitting from reading "somebody else's mail".
- (6) **Apocalyptic:** Some view the book of Revelation as a symbolical message that should be taken figuratively, but this leaves the seven churches as only stories to learn from, and not as true accounts of real people that needed God's instruction.
- (7) **History:** There are no Biblical or practical reasons to believe that these churches represent seven different stages of church history, covering the last 2,000 years, as many people try to teach. This view only distracts the readers of Revelation from the real message of the book.

### SPECIFIC APPLICATION

- (1) **Messages:** Seven literal churches in the first century needed God's personal messages conveyed to them for their individual needs, just like all of the other New Testament letters that were written.
- (2) **Warnings:** People living since the New Testament was completed can benefit from these specific messages of warnings and promises. As the saying goes, "If the shoe fits, wear it!" (2 Timothy 3:16).
- (3) **Eschatology:** Chapters 2 and 3 prepare believers for Daniel's 70th week, and so they help to explain why the rest of the book was written.
- (4) **Explanation:** The "rapture" does not take place in 4:1, nor is the church universal referred to anywhere in the book of Revelation. Those who claim that the church disappears after chapter three are mistaken.

(5) **Education:** We do not have all of the answers to every question posed, but we are seeking to learn so that can rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

March 19, 2017

## Overview: Seven Churches Revelation 1-3

- I. **EPHESUS: "First Things First" (2:1-7)**
  - A. **Praise:** "toil...endured...hate deeds of Nicolaitans" (vv.2,3,6)
  - B. **Priority:** "Repent...or else I am coming to you" (v.5)
  - C. **Promise:** "I will grant to eat of the tree of life" (v.7)
- II. **SMYRNA: "Faithful Until Death" (2:8-11)\***
  - A. **Praise:** "tribulation...poverty...blasphemy...[faithful]" (v.9)
  - B. **Priority:** "Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (v.10)
  - C. **Promise:** "crown of life...not hurt by 2nd death" (vv.10-11)
- III. **PERGAMUM: "Flirting with Idolatry" (2:12-17)**
  - A. **Praise:** "you hold fast My name...not deny" (v.13)
  - B. **Priority:** "repent/or else I am coming to you quickly" (v.16)
  - C. **Promise:** "hidden manna...white stone...new name" (v.17)
- IV. **THYATIRA: "False Teaching Tolerated" (2:18-29)**
  - A. **Praise:** "your love...faith...service...perseverance" (v.19)
  - B. **Priority:** "what you have, hold fast until I come" (v.25)
  - C. **Promise:** "I will give authority...morning star" (vv.26,28)
- V. **SARDIS: "Funeral on Horizon" (3:1-6)**
  - A. **Praise:** "a few people...have not soiled their garments" (v.4)
  - B. **Priority:** "repent...If you will not wake up, I will come" (v.3)
  - C. **Promise:** "will walk in white...confess his name" (vv.4-5)
- VI. **PHILADELPHIA: "Freedom thru Christ" (3:7-13)\***
  - A. **Praise:** "you have kept My word...not denied My name" (v.8)
  - B. **Priority:** "I am coming quickly; hold fast" (v.11)
  - C. **Promise:** "make him a pillar...write on him the name" (v.12)
- VII. **LAODICEA: "Foolishly Counterfeited Truth"(3:14-22)**
  - A. **Praise:** *Only church not praised.*
  - B. **Priority:** "repent...I stand at the door and knock" (v.20)
  - C. **Promise:** "I will come into him...sit on My throne" (vv.20-21)