



Revelation 2-3

JESUS' MESSAGE TO HIS CHURCH

These churches were representative of all churches at that time as well as subsequent generations. ...These letters are for the church past, present, and future. Two reasons substantiate the representative character of these seven churches. The first is simply the fact that there are seven. Out of all the churches that might have been chosen...only these seven are selected. Second, in the promise to each of these churches at the close of each letter is the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to "the churches." Though each letter is written to a church, the promise is to all the churches.

—Charles C. Ryrie

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

1. They are _____ churches in the first century.

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea were seven local churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). Geographically, they form a circle, moving clock-wise, in the order of their messages.

2. They are _____ churches.

These seven churches describe the type of churches that can be found in every age of history—conservative, suffering, compromised, corrupt, dead, faithful, and prideful.

3. They may represent the general progression of the church age down through _____.

Since Revelation 2-3 describes the “things that are” (1:19), then there may be an implied historical progression in the order of these churches. However, this is highly debated and may reflect a more “western interpretation” of history.

THE FORMAT OF THE SEVEN LETTERS

Address to the Church
Description of Christ
Words of Commendation
Words of Rebuke
Words of Exhortation
Promise to Believers

As to why seven churches were chosen: the symbolic meaning of seven indicates completeness or perfection. It appears to be a deliberate choice, like the many other occurrences of seven in the book of Revelation, to signify that these seven churches typify all churches in every age.

—Tony Garland

The historical-prophetic interpretation . . . states that while all seven types of churches always exist, one type dominates a particular era of church history. Throughout church history all seven types of churches will be present, but one type will tend to dominate a particular period of church history.

—Arnold Fruchtenbaum

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? —1 John 5:4-5

All true believers are overcomers, who have by God's grace and power overcome the damning power of the evil world system.

—John MacArthur, Jr.

	Christ	Positive	Negative	Exhortation	Promise
Ephesus <i>Conservative</i>	Holds the seven stars	Active ministry, strong doctrine	Left your first love	Remember and repent	Eat from tree of life in Paradise
Smyrna <i>Suffering</i>	First and Last, resurrected One	Persecuted, spiritually rich		Don't fear, be faithful to death	Not hurt by the second death
Pergamum <i>Compromised</i>	Has sharp two-edged sword	Holding fast in Satanic culture	False doctrine, "Nicolaitans"	Repent	Hidden manna, white stone
Thyatira <i>Corrupt</i>	Eyes like flame of fire	Love, service, faith, patience	False doctrine, "Jezebel"	Hold fast	Power to rule, the morning star
Sardis <i>Dead</i>	Has the seven Spirits of God		Dead, defiled	Remember, hold fast, repent	Not blot out his name
Philadelphia <i>Faithful</i>	Holy, true, has key of David	Kept My word, persevered		Hold fast	Pillar in temple, name on them
Laodicea <i>Prideful</i>	Amen, Faithful and true witness		Self-righteous, "lukewarm"	Be zealous, repent, open door	Sit with Me on My throne

THE DANGERS TO A LOCAL CHURCH

1. Leaving your first _____ for Christ.
2. Drifting into false _____.
3. Living like the _____.
4. Becoming _____ and self-righteous.

THE MARKS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

1. Growing _____ for Jesus Christ.
2. Steadfast commitment to biblical _____.
3. Persevering pursuit of _____, even when it leads to opposition, suffering, and persecution in this world.
4. Active, humble works of _____, ministry, and service.

THE RESPONSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

- Realize my contribution to the health/sickness of the church.
- Repent of any wrong attitudes, words, or actions.
- Renew my passion for Christ and commitment to biblical truth.

It is only as we love Christ fervently that we can serve Him faithfully. —Warren Wiersbe

Nicolaitans (2:6,15). According to early church writers, a reference to followers of Nicholas (an early deacon, Acts 6:5) who later forsook the Lord and promoted a morally promiscuous lifestyle.

Satan's throne (2:13). Pergamum was home to worship of Zeus, Dionysius (god of wine), Asclepius (symbolized by a serpent), and Caesar Augustus.

Balaam (2:14). Helped lead Israel astray through sexual immorality (Num. 25:1-3; 31:16).

The Scriptures seem to teach that rewards will be both for individual Christians and for churches, particularly as we look at Jesus Christ's messages to the seven churches in Revelation. Our Christian walk will be judged both as individuals and as a corporate body of believers.

—Gene Getz