



MBS033

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION



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*Now we beseech you, brethren,
touching the coming of our Lord Jesus
Christ, and our gathering together unto
him; to the end that ye be not quickly
shaken from your mind, nor yet be
troubled, either by spirit, or by word,
or by epistle as from us, as that the
day of the Lord is just at hand; let no
man beguile you in any wise: for it
will not be, except the falling away
come first, and the man of sin be
revealed, the son of perdition.
II Thessalonians 2:1-3*

NOTES**INTRODUCTION**

In Revelation 2 and 3, we have a series of seven short letters that Yeshua (Jesus) told the Apostle John to write. These seven letters to seven churches basically describe the nature of the churches during our entire Church Age. We are going to study these seven letters in the course of this series to see what their import is, and what lessons they are teaching us as believers in churches today.

A. The Characteristics

There are several characteristics found in these seven letters that should be noted. First, these are all messages from the Messiah to the churches; they are the last audible statements of the Messiah given in the Scriptures. Previous to this, His last audible statements were to Paul on the Damascus Road.

Secondly, they involve the visible rather than the invisible church. The latter is the Body of the Messiah, which is composed of all true believers since Pentecost. It is sometimes referred to as the “universal church.” The visible church is the local body of the church and may contain both believers and unbelievers since it includes all professing believers, whether they really are or not. While the invisible church has only believers, the visible church can have both. As it shall be seen, the seven churches contain some of both.

A third characteristic is that the Messiah has something against five of these churches and nothing against two of them. Furthermore, the Messiah finds something good in six of these churches but nothing good in the seventh church. The seventh church is entirely outside of His favor.

A fourth characteristic is that there are four things in common in all

seven letters. The first thing they have in common is that every letter has a description of the Messiah taken from the description of the glorified Son of Man found in chapter 1, with each description being somehow related to what follows in that particular letter. Chapter 1 gave a complete description of the glorified Son of Man; then each one of these letters takes a part of that description and relates it to the content of the individual letter. The second thing in common is that all seven letters contain the words "I know." Five times it is: *I know your works*; once: *I know your tribulation*; and once: *I know where you dwell*. The point being made is that the Messiah is intimately aware of the state of each individual, local church. The third statement common to all seven letters is *he that overcomes*, followed by a promise that is somehow related to the particular nature of that church. The fourth and final statement common in all seven letters is the phrase: *he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*. It is an admonition to obedience; the churches are responsible to conform to the demands of the letters.

B. The Interpretation

The key question is how these letters are to be interpreted. For one thing, there are statements made in these letters, which can be true only of the individual church. On the other hand, there are statements that can hardly be limited to that particular church and that particular local situation, and sometimes cannot be true of it at all. These facts have led to a variety of views as to how they are to be interpreted. There are two areas of common agreement. The third area is the point of disagreement. The two areas of agreement are as follows.

First, these seven churches were seven literal churches, existing in John's day to whom John was writing. They were also seven types of churches that existed at that time.

Secondly, all seven church types exist throughout the Church Age. No matter what part of church history one may turn to, he will find all seven types of churches. All seven types will continue to exist until the Rapture.

Thirdly, while there is general consensus on the first two points among premillennial writers, this is not the case with the third issue, which is known as The Historic-Prophetic Interpretation view 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. Thus, these letters present a prophetic picture of the seven historical periods in which the visible church will develop. These letters are being written to the seven churches, which are representative of the whole. These seven were chosen: first, because of the particular meaning of their names; and secondly, because the situation of each particular local church would

also be characteristic of a future period of church history. Certain statements made to individual churches cannot be true of the strictly local situation; they must have a far wider meaning.

The question this third perspective raises is: Does this view violate The Golden Rule of Interpretation and the principle of a literal hermeneutic? If it could be clearly shown that all that was said in a particular letter can be or was true of that particular church or that type of church, then the answer would be, "Yes." But if statements are made that cannot in any way be true of that particular church or only of that church, then the answer would be, "No." This author would prefer to limit the interpretation to that church only or to that type of church only, but now and then statements are made that render this impossible. One example is the promise to keep the Church of Philadelphia *from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole earth*. The time is long past that this promise could be kept only to that particular church, for that local church no longer exists; nor can this promise be limited to that type of church because other types of churches of these two chapters will also share in the promise. Hence, the Historic-Prophetic interpretation does have strong merit, though it is not without its problems. While this author is not totally comfortable with this third point, he is still more so with it than without it. Furthermore, it is the literal interpretation of such promises that has moved this author to that position.

However, this view is not germane to the main issue: that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 cover the period of *the things which are*, the Church Age. Even if the third point is abandoned, it will not affect the basic development of this study. As each of the letters is studied, all three points will be presented. One can proceed to drop those parts applied to a specific point of church history, but the other two parts will still remain intact. Thus one can conclude that these seven letters do not actually survey seven periods of church history, but all seven types are here, and at the Rapture, the believing Church is removed while the unbelieving stay behind.

C. The Basic Outline

The seven letters all follow a basic outline containing six items: first, the destination; secondly, the condemnation; thirdly, the description of the Messiah; fourthly, the exhortation; fifth, the commendation; and sixth, the promise. Not all of the letters have all six points of the outline, nor are they necessarily in that order, but this is the basic structure of each letter.

I. EPHESUS: THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH: A.D.30 TO A.D. 100

The first letter is in Revelation 2:1-7: *To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that*

walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: I know your works, and your toil and patience, and that you can not bear evil men, and did try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and did find them false; and you have patience and did bear for my name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you did leave your first love. Remember therefore whence you are fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to you, and will move your candlestick out of its place, except you repent. But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

NOTES**A. The Destination**

The destination of the letter is Ephesus, which means, “desired.” It represents the period of the Apostolic Church, which began in A.D. 30 and continued until about A.D. 100, the time of the death of John, the last apostle and author of the Book of Revelation. Ephesus was the type of church that typified the Apostolic Church.

B. The Description of the Messiah

This is followed by a description of the Messiah taken from Revelation 1:13, 16, and 20. It points to the control the Messiah has over the destiny of the churches.

C. The Commendation

The commendation is found in verses 2-3 and 6. First, they are commended for condemning false teachers (vv. 2-3). In Acts 20:29-31, Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that false teachers would come and despoil the church. By the time Paul had written the Books of I and II Timothy, the false teachers had arrived and were causing corruption in the church (I Tim. 1:3-4, 18-20; 6:3-10, 20-21; II Tim. 2:14-18; 4:1-4). These false teachers created havoc, and Timothy was somewhat discouraged when Paul gave him some advice on how to handle the situation. By the time this first letter was written, the church at Ephesus had overcome the problem; they had resisted the false teachers, and they are commended for it.

Secondly, they are commended for hating *the works of the Nicolaitans* (v. 6). In church history, there is no record or mention of this group, so clues as to its identity need to be sought elsewhere. The meaning of the word in Greek is “rulers of the people.” This meaning may imply that this was an attempt to divide and make a distinction between the clergy and the laity, thus creating a division in which the clergy exercised rulership over the laity. Certainly, Elders had the biblical authority to determine the policy of that local church. But the authority described here probably went much further than the issues in the local church and may have extended to the personal lives of the members. The Ephesians hated this kind of thing and are commended by the Messiah for it.

D. The Condemnation

The condemnation is found in verse 4. They had lost their *first love*, referring to love of the Messiah and love of the Word. The second generation of believers had grown lax and had become cold. They did not have the fervor of the first generation, hence there is condemnation. A similar problem is seen in the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews; they were a group of second generation Jewish believers who, due to persecution, had grown lax and hence had lost their *first love*.

E. The Exhortation

The exhortation is found in verse 5. They are urged to *remember* their first love, *repent*, and return to it. Failure will result in the removal of their *candlestick*, the removal of their witness.

F. The Promise

The promise is found in verse 7. While the letters are addressed to the churches as a whole, all of the promises are to individuals in the churches who overcome the problem of the church as a whole. So to the one who does overcome and returns to his first love, there is promised the privilege of eating of the fruit of the *tree of life* in the Eternal Order. Eating with someone implies fellowship; so the one who overcomes will fellowship with the Messiah. Since this also involves the tree of life, it is a promise of a share in the Eternal Order.

This is the letter to the church of Ephesus. Certain things that are true of the local church are also true of the Apostolic Church in the second-generation stage. This is the type of church that dominated the first period of church history.

II. SMYRNA: THE CHURCH OF THE ROMAN PERSECUTION: A.D. 100 TO A.D. 313

The second letter is in Revelation 2:8-11: *And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again: I know your tribulation, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.*

A. The Destination

The destination is in verse 8a, and it is to the church in the city of Smyrna. Smyrna means “myrrh,” which is associated with death and embalming (Jn. 19:31-40). Thus in the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, this church becomes the fitting symbol to represent the second period of church history, that of the Roman persecution from about A.D. 100 to A.D. 313.

B. The Description of the Messiah

The description of the Messiah is in verse 8b. It is taken from Revelation 1:17-18. He tells the church that He is *the first and the last* and that He Himself *was dead and lived again*. Although He died violently, He nevertheless did live again because of the Resurrection. Since many of these people will also die violent deaths, this description is given as one of comfort for them, for they, too, will live again by way of resurrection.

C. The Commendation

The commendation is found in verse 9. First, they are commended for having patience in sufferings. They are good examples of what the writer of the Book of Hebrews tells its recipients they need patient endurance. They have suffered fiercely, but they endured it patiently.

Secondly, they are commended for enduring *the blasphemy* [of those who claim to be] *Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan*. In the local situation, this may refer to a particular incident for which we lack historical confirmation. In church history, this may refer to the Romans who considered themselves to be the “people of God,” with the emperor being a god himself. The believers were thus being persecuted by those claiming to be the people of God, but were not. Believers were often killed on the very grounds that they refused to sacrifice to the emperor.

Smyrna is one of the two churches that Jesus had nothing against, and so there is no condemnation.

D. The Exhortation

The passage proceeds to the exhortation, found in verse 10. The exhortation concerns three things. First, they are urged not to fear the things that they are *about to suffer*.

Secondly, He warns them that they are about to suffer persecution for a period of ten days. Ten literal days of persecution may apply to the local situation, and perhaps there was a ten-day period in which many suffered and died. For this, too, there is simply a lack of historical confirmation for there is not a complete record of church history in this early period of time or of this particular church. From the viewpoint of the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, some have noted that between the years A.D. 96 to A.D. 313, while there were more than ten Roman emperors, only ten of them actually officially persecuted the church: Domitian, A.D. 96; Trajan, A.D. 98 to A.D. 117; Hadrian A.D. 117 to A.D. 138; Antonius Pius A.D. 138 to A.D. 161; Marcus Aurelius A.D. 161 to A.D. 180; Septimus Severus A.D. 193 to A.D. 211; Maximin A.D. 235 to A.D. 238; Decius A.D. 249 to A.D. 251; Valarian A.D. 251 to A.D. 260; and Diocletian A.D. 284 to A.D. 305. These ten Roman emperors might be represented in the ten days of persecution. However, in the Book of revelation, time zones, be they days, months, or years, are always quite literal and it is best to

take these ten days as being the same. Therefore, they refer to a literal ten day period of persecution suffered by the Church of Smyrna. Even if one accepts the Historical Prophetic interpretation scheme, it is best to limit this to those parts that cannot be true of that local church or only that local church. So this church may represent the second period of church history, but the ten days should remain only ten days, not ten periods of time.

Thirdly, they are exhorted not to fear death, for, if they die as martyrs, then they shall secure *the crown of life*.

E. The Promise

The promise is found in verse 11. Although they may die violently once, they will not die the second time, which is the *second death* in the Lake of Fire. Their persecutors may not die as martyrs, but will eventually die the first time physically. According to Revelation 20, after they have died physically, they will be resurrected from the dead at the end of the Millennium. They will then stand before the Great White Throne for judgment, at which time the degree of their punishment will be determined. Certainly, those who were responsible for martyring and killing believers will suffer greater punishment and will then be cast into the Lake of Fire, the *second death*.

The saints or the believers may die violently by the sword, crucifixion or stoning; but when they are resurrected, they will never undergo the process of the *second death*, because they are going to be resurrected to enjoy two things. First, they will enjoy the Millennium, where they will be co-reigners with Yeshua the Messiah during the 1,000 year reign. And secondly, they will live eternally in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. Their killers, who were persecuting them, will die the first time and also die the second time, the *second death*.

This is the second letter to the church of Smyrna. It represents the church of the Roman persecution from A.D. 100 to A.D. 313. Smyrna is one of the two churches that the Messiah had nothing against, so there is no condemnation.

III. PERGAMUM: THE CHURCH OF THE AGE OF CONSTANTINE: A.D. 313 TO A.D. 600

The third letter is in Revelation 2:12-17: *And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that has the sharp two-edged sword: I know where you dwell, even where Satan's throne is; and you held fast my name, and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So have you also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I*

will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

NOTES

A. The Destination

In verse 12a, the destination of the letter is said to be to Pergamum, which means “thoroughly married.” It was a major city of idolatry with many temples. One of these was the Temple of Esculapius, containing an idol in the form of a serpent. This may be what Satan's throne has reference to. In the Historic-Prophetic view, it is the church of the age of Constantine that saw the church “married” to the state. In A.D. 313, Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire, and thus the church was married to the state.

B. The Description of the Messiah

The description of the Messiah in verse 12b is taken from Revelation 1:16. This description is one of judgment, especially of that exercised by the Word of God.

C. The Commendation

The commendation is in verse 13. They are commended for not denying the faith, singling out one of their faithful members, *Antipas*, who suffered martyrdom for his witness. Nothing more is known of *Antipas*, who suffered a small hint of what occurred in the local church at Pergamum. His name means “against all” and may indicate that he stood against all satanic worship. The war against their faith was being inspired by satanic opposition. The Pergamum church was said to be dwelling where Satan himself dwelled; where Esculapius, the serpent-son, was worshipped.

D. The Condemnation

The condemnation is found in verses 14-15. They are condemned for two things. First, in verse 14 they are condemned for allowing some to *hold the teaching of Balaam*. In Numbers 22-24, Balaam was a seer of Mesopotamia. He was hired by Balak, the king of Moab who was in league with the Midianites, to pronounce a prophetic curse on Israel. Although on four different occasions Balaam tried to curse the Jews, God took control of the seer so that on all four occasions he pronounced a blessing on the Jews instead. With the failure of pronouncing a prophetic curse on Israel, Balaam used a different tactic to have Israel cursed by God. At his recommendation, the females of Moab and Midian were sent out to entice the Jewish men sexually. Part of the enticement included the worship of the gods of Moab and Midian. The plot worked; Israel was cursed, and many died in a plague. However, this scheme later caused the destruction of the Midianites and the death of Balaam himself (Num. 25:1-16; 31:1-20; Deut. 23:3-6). The teaching of Balaam was the encouragement

of corruption by intermarriage, resulting in fornication and idolatry. No doubt, in the city of Pergamum, intermarriage with the pagan world was a real problem. Because civil and religious life were so intertwined, for the believers to accept social engagements probably meant some involvement with paganism. Apparently, many believers compromised anyway.

In the age of Constantine, the church became married to the state, which eventually resulted in spiritual fornication and idolatry. Now that the church was made a state religion, people all over the Roman Empire were baptized into the church without any real regard to personal faith. Simply by being baptized, they were able to join the new establishment. As a result, a massive amount of pagans entered the church, bringing many of their pagan practices with them. Idolatry entered the church as these people added Yeshua to the many other gods that they already had. This led to spiritual fornication and idolatry. It planted the seeds for what later developed into the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, they were rightly condemned for holding to *the teaching of Balaam*.

Secondly, in verse 15 they are condemned for permitting *the teaching of the Nicolaitans*. The very group that Ephesus was commended for not tolerating, Pergamum was condemned for tolerating. It was during this period of church history that a distinction began to emerge between the clergy and the laity with different sets of laws and regulations for each group. A priestly order was set up in the church, which further corrupted and laid the foundation for what was to follow in the next phase of the Church Age.

E. The Exhortation

The exhortation is found in verse 16. They are exhorted to *repent*, to change their minds, and to clean up the church or it will be judged.

F. The Promise

The promise is in verse 17 and it is threefold. First, the one who overcomes is promised *the hidden manna*. Manna in the Old Testament provided food for the children of Israel when they departed from the land of Egypt. The person leaving the state church might be deprived of his job and welfare; but in spite of what he may be deprived of, God will provide his sustenance.

Secondly, they are promised *a white stone*. In the ancient world, there were two ways that one received *a white stone*. One way was when a person was found innocent in a trial; he was given *a white stone* as a symbol of acquittal. Another way was when a person was to be received into the membership of a private club; he would be given a white stone, which was a symbol of his acceptance. Both elements might be included in this second promise. He will be acquitted of the guilt of that particular church, and it will be a mark of his acceptance with the Messiah.

The third promise is that he will be given *a new name* written on the stone, which only he will know. Often in Scripture, *a new name* was given to a person after he had overcome certain spiritual problems. One example is that of Jacob, who was given the name Israel (Gen. 32:22-32). Another is Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham (Gen. 17:1-8).

NOTES

IV. THYATIRA: THE CHURCH OF THE DARK AGES: A.D. 600 TO A.D. 1517

The fourth letter is in Revelation 2:18-29: *And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: I know your works, and your love and faith and ministry and patience, and that your last works are more than the first. But I have this against you, that you suffered the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willed not to repent of her fornication. Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden. Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come. And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: and I will give him the morning star. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

A. The Destination

The destination in verse 18a is the church of Thyatira, which means “continual or perpetual sacrifice.” In the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, it becomes a fitting description of the church of the Dark Ages as embodied in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the continual sacrifice in the Mass. In Roman Catholic theology, when the priest consecrates the wafer and the cup, they are said to become the real body and the real blood of the Messiah through Transubstantiation, and so the Messiah is re-sacrificed. The laity were given only the wafer and were refused the cup because of the belief that the real blood might be accidentally spilled. The cup was for the clergy alone. Thus, the distinction between the clergy and the laity, begun by the Nicolaitans, had been brought to fruition.

B. The Description of the Messiah

The description of the Messiah is found in verse 18b and is taken from Revelation 1:14-15. They are symbols of judgment. It is the Messiah, who is the *Son of God*, and He alone is to be worshipped; there is to be no addition whatsoever.

C. The Commendation

In verse 19 is the commendation. They are commended for their *works, love, faith, ministry*, and *patience*, and that these works were increasing. They were characterized by good works and so their external appearance was positive.

D. The Condemnation

This is followed by a lengthy condemnation in verses 20-23. In verses 20-21, the condemnation involves their tolerance of a *woman* [named] *Jezebel*. Conceivably, there may have been a woman by that name in the local church at Thyatira, but this is highly unlikely. The name Jezebel is a Phoenician name, and by this time, the Phoenicians had disappeared as a separate ethnic identity and had become part of the Greek speaking world. Furthermore, Thyatira was not located in Phoenicia, but in Asia Minor, which is modern-day Turkey. It is statements such as this that lend credence to the Historical Prophetical interpretation. Furthermore, when a woman is used symbolically in Scripture, she represents a religious entity. This might be either positive or negative. On the positive side, there is Israel as the Wife of Jehovah and the Church as the Bride of the Messiah. On the negative side, there is the woman with the leaven (Mat. 13:33), the Great Harlot of Revelation 17, and here, the woman Jezebel. This is most likely a reference to the Old Testament Jezebel to describe the state of the church in Thyatira, just as Balaam was used in describing the state of the church of Pergamum.

Jezebel was a Sidonian princess who became the wife of Ahab, the king of Israel (I Kg. 16:29-33). She was responsible for introducing a pagan religion into Israel that surpassed all the previous sins of idolatry in the northern kingdom. Idolatry in the northern kingdom began with Jeroboam I, who was the first king. But there was a difference between the *sins of Jeroboam* and the sins of Baal worship introduced by Jezebel. The *sins of Jeroboam* were a corruption of the true religion. Jeroboam set up a golden calf in Dan and in Bethel, but these golden calves represented the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt. This was idolatry, but it was a corruption of the true Jehovah worship (I Kg. 12:25-33). Furthermore, Jeroboam could cite a precedent in the worship of the golden calf built by Aaron. His words concerning the golden calf in I Kings 12:28 are a quotation of Aaron's words in Exodus 32:4.

With Jezebel, it was not merely a corruption of the true religion, but a whole new god and system of worship were introduced in Israel (I Kg. 16:29-33). Through Jezebel, Baal worship came into the Land, resulting in more idolatry than ever before. Involved in the worship of Baal was sexual immorality. In the corruption of Jehovah worship, morality was still present, but in the worship of Baal, there was total immorality.

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Jezebel thus became a very real picture of what the Roman Catholic Church evolved into during the period of the Dark Ages. It introduced a paganism that resulted in idolatry and spiritual fornication, and it became a new religious system bearing little resemblance to the New Testament church.

It was during this period that ten false doctrines were introduced into the church. First, justification by works, not simply by faith. Secondly, baptismal regeneration; that a person is saved by baptism. Thirdly, the worship of images. Fourthly, celibacy; forbidding priests to marry, a further distinction between clergy and laity. Fifth, confessionism; that sins are confessed to a priest who then declares absolution of those sins. Sixth, purgatory; a place of confinement which is neither Heaven nor Hell, but a place where one has to be “refined” before going into Heaven, hence sanctification was not complete at death. Seventh, transubstantiation; the concept of the continual and perpetual sacrifice of the Messiah. Eighth, indulgences; that through the giving of money, a person's time in purgatory could be reduced. Ninth, penance; involving the torment of the body in order to reduce one's time in purgatory. And, tenth, Mariolatry; the worship of the Virgin Mary, her elevation as the “mother of God” and the declaration of her deity. All this led to idolatry and spiritual fornication. Jezebel in Thyatira is the Roman Catholic Church within Christendom of the Dark Ages.

In verses 22-23, there is a description of the judgment on Jezebel. In verse 22, the woman is to be cast into the *great tribulation*. This means that, unlike the true Church, the Roman Catholic Church will go into the Great Tribulation and will play a role during that time. As part of her judgment, the Roman Catholic Church will be cast into the Tribulation period. This is another example of a passage that simply cannot be limited to the local situation. If there really was a specific woman names Jezebel in Thyatira, she would by now be long dead and, therefore, would not be cast into the Great Tribulation. Yet the prophecy is very specific: she and her children will be cast into it. Only if Jezebel is representative of a system can this be true. And again, when a woman is used symbolically, it symbolizes a religious system or entity.

In verse 23, the *children* of Jezebel, that is, the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church will suffer physical violence and death as part of God's judgment on Jezebel.

E. The Exhortation

The exhortation is found in verses 24-25. The exhortation involves those who are not part of the “Jezebel system” and do not know *the deep things of Satan*. The Roman Catholic Church must be viewed as Satan's counterfeit. The exhortation is to those who are not involved in Satan's counterfeit, they are told to *hold fast* to that which is pure.

They are told to *hold fast* to the New Testament truth as over against the Roman Catholic Church system. While this may not sound like a major obligation, in the context of the Dark Ages, it took tremendous spiritual courage and energy.

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F. The Promise

Finally, in verses 26-29 there is the promise, which is twofold. First, the one overcoming will have a part in the Messianic Kingdom. In contrast to the false authority of the Roman Catholic Church, they will have true *authority over the nations* during the Messianic Kingdom. Secondly, they will have *the morning star*. Here, another figure is being used in the Book of Revelation, but no speculation is needed. In Revelation 22:16, the Messiah Himself is declared to be *the morning star*. Thus, they will possess the Messiah. The possession of the true faith presupposes a possession of the Person of the Messiah.

V. SARDIS: THE CHURCH OF THE REFORMATION:

A.D. 1517 TO A.D. 1648

The fifth letter is in Revelation 3:1-6: *And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and you are dead. Be you watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of your perfected before my God. Remember therefore how you have received and did hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you. But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

A. The Destination

In verse 1a, the destination of the fifth letter is Sardis, which means “those escaping.” In the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, it represents the church of the Reformation, which began in 1517 with Martin Luther's posting of his Ninety-five Theses and ended in 1648 with the signing of the Peace of Westphalia. It could also be approximated as ending in 1700.

B. The Description of the Messiah

In verse 1b, the description of the Messiah is taken from Revelation 1:4, 16 and 20. It is a reference to *the seven Spirits of God* as over against a church without spirit.

C. The Condemnation

Then in verse 1c, is the condemnation. They have *a name* that lives, but actually, they are dead. This is a valid description of the church of the Reformation as it developed in its later stages; they had a name that lived. The Reformation resulted in much doctrinal correction and

good creeds. Much of the wrong done and the doctrines promulgated by the Roman Catholic Church were corrected by the Reformation. The different churches developing in the Reformation had good creeds and solid biblical doctrine. Nevertheless, they were dead; there was no spiritual vitality. They became dead because they failed to rectify the basic problem, which was the unity of church and state. After they broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, they too became state churches. In Germany and Scandinavia, the Lutheran church became the state church. In England, it was the Anglican Church or Church of England; in Scotland, the Presbyterian Church; in one part of Switzerland, the Calvinists or Reformed church; in another part of Switzerland, the Zwinglian Church. The Reformation failed to correct the problem of church and state unity; therefore, it eventually became a dead church.

What corrupted Pergamum also corrupted Sardis. Because of the existence of state churches, children who were born in a given locality were simply baptized and by this means became members of the church. Personal faith had little or nothing to do with becoming a member of the church. So, in a matter of time, the greater part of the church was composed of unbelievers. The churches all had good, solid creeds, except that they were still bound to Replacement Theology. So it appeared that they were living churches, but they were dead. There was no spiritual life because of the lack of personal faith, and a great part of each church was composed of unbelievers. Even to this day, there are state churches in Europe, which have good doctrinal creeds, but they are composed of people who are spiritually dead.

D. The Exhortation

The exhortation is found in verses 2-3. In verse 2, they are exhorted to resurrect that which is about to die; that is, to go back to spiritual life as well as good doctrinal creeds. Spiritual life is impossible without good doctrine, but good doctrine without spiritual life is dead. Both are therefore necessary. In verse 3 the point is made that deadness will result in the Messiah's coming unexpectedly. A church with spiritual life will not be surprised when the Messiah returns for His Bride, the Church. But a dead church will be caught unaware, because they will not be expecting Him. And as unbelievers, they shall be left behind.

E. The Commendation

In verse 4, there is the commendation to "those escaping." Their *garments* are undefiled and *white*. Hence, these are the ones who have exercised faith and do have spiritual life and have overcome the deadness of the church.

F. The Promise

The promise in verses 5-6 is threefold. First, they will have *white garments*. The symbol used here is explained in a different part of the Revelation. Revelation 7:14 states: *and they washed their robes, and made*

them *white in the blood of the Lamb*. Thus, the *white garments* are a symbol of salvation. The first promise to those escaping is salvation, because for them the good doctrine is not dead, but alive in the Messiah. A second promise is that their names will not be blotted out of *the book of life*. This promise involves their salvation, which will be eternally secure, because their names will not be blotted out. It is a promise of eternal security. Then thirdly, the name of the believer will be confessed by the Messiah *before* [the] *Father, and before his angels*.

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VI. PHILADELPHIA: THE CHURCH OF THE GREAT MISSIONARY MOVEMENT: A.D. 1648 TO A.D. 1900

The sixth letter is in Revelation 3:7-13: *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none open: I know your works (behold, I have set before you a door opened, which none can shut), that you have a little power, and did keep my word, and did not deny my name. Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly: hold fast that which you have, that no one take your crown. He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from my God, and mine own new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

A. The Destination

In verse 7a, the destination is the church in the city of Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love.” In the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, it is a fitting symbol of the church during the great missionary movement from 1700 through 1900. This was a period of great missionary names, such as Hudson Taylor, Adoraim Judson, and others.

B. The Description of the Messiah

The description of the Messiah in verse 7b is taken from Revelation 1:18, picturing the Messiah as the One with authority to open and close doors.

C. The Commendation

The commendation is found in verse 8. They are commended for making use of the open door. It is the Messiah Himself who opened the door, and the Philadelphians were faithful in making use of it.

During the period of 1700 to 1900, there was virtually no place in the world where a missionary could not go; every place was open to them. Today, more and more countries are closing their doors to

missionaries. But during those two centuries, there were virtually no limitations and this church took advantage of it. They had a *little power*, because it was the minority supporting these missionaries. Yet the *little power* was used to accomplish great things, and they are commended for it.

D. The Promise

The promise is found in verses 9-10 and 12-13 and it is fourfold. First, in verse 9 they are promised fruit from those who claim to be Jews or the people of God and are not. It is still the period described by Hosea 1:8-9 and 2:23, when Israel is on the sideline of God's program and considered to be *not my people*. But in the future, they will again become *my people* (Hos. 1:10-2:1; 3:5).

It is interesting to note that it is during this time when Jewish missions came into its own. By 1900, some 250,000 Jews came to faith in the Messiah. Jewish missions first began in Germany, took root in England, and finally came to fruition in the United States. It was a time when many of the “natural branches” were re-grafted into their own olive tree. However, it is more likely that this verse deals more literally with those who claim to be Jews, but they are not. This is also the period that saw the rise of cults; such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and others. One common element among them is to claim to be the “real” Jews by claims to be “the 144,000 Jews” or “the ten lost tribes of Israel.” Nevertheless, the Philadelphia church will win converts among these as well.

The second promise is in verse 10; they will not go into the Great Tribulation period. This church is promised deliverance from the Great Tribulation period. The Jezebel element in the Thyatira church will go through the Tribulation, but the church of Philadelphia will not. This is not a promise that can be limited to Philadelphia, or at all, since this church has long passed away. This fact also supports the Historic-Prophetic interpretation.

In this passage the church is promised to be kept *from the* [period] *of trial* [that is about to fall] *upon the whole world*. In the context of the Book of Revelation, it is the Tribulation, found in chapters 6-19, which is this period of trial that is to fall upon the whole earth. It is from this period of trial that the church is to be kept. This verse does not say that the church will be merely kept safe during the trial, but it will be kept *from the* [very] *hour of the trial*; that is, from the very time of it. This requires a removal before the Tribulation ever occurs. If Revelation 3:10 means only that the church will be kept safe during the Tribulation, then something goes terribly wrong. Throughout the Tribulation, saints are being killed on a massive scale (Rev. 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7, 15; 14:13; 17:6; 18:24). If these saints are church saints, they are not being kept safe and Revelation 3:10 is meaningless. Only if church saints and Tribulation saints are kept distinct does the

promise of Revelation 3:10 make any sense.

The third promise, in verse 12a, is that they will serve as *a pillar in the temple of...God*. On one hand, this may be a reference to being a part in the Temple of God as is seen in the invisible Church. On the other hand, it may also refer to the Millennial Temple during the Messianic Age.

The fourth promise, in verse 12b, is that they will have on them three new names: the name of God; the name of Jerusalem; and the new name of the Messiah.

E. The Exhortation

The exhortation is in verse 11. It is merely for them to continue to do as they are doing, for they are doing well.

This is the second church for which there is no condemnation. Like Smyrna, the Messiah finds nothing against this church and is satisfied with it.

VII. LAODICEA: THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTASY: A.D. 1900 TO THE PRESENT DAY

The seventh and final letter is in Revelation 3:14-22: *And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may cloth yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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. He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

A. The Destination

The destination of the letter in verse 14a is to Laodicea, which means, “people ruling.” This is set in contrast to God ruling in the church. It is a church entirely ruled by men, for the Holy Spirit is not present and doing His ministry of guiding. In the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, this becomes an accurate description of the church of the Apostasy, which began in the early 1900s and continues to the present day.

B. The Description of the Messiah

The description of the Messiah is in verse 14b and is taken from

Revelation 1:4, 6, and 7. The Messiah is described as *the faithful and true witness*, whereas this church is neither faithful nor true to the Word.

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All six of the previous churches had at least one word of commendation, but this church has none. There is nothing commendable in this church as it is entirely an unsaved church.

C. The Condemnation

The text continues to the condemnation in verses 15-17. In verses 15-16, they are characterized by lukewarmness. The distinctions between hot, cold, and lukewarm can be determined by the overall context. The *hot* are the truly saved believers. The *cold* are those who are not believers and do not claim to be believers. The *lukewarm* are those who do claim to believe in Jesus, but are not truly regenerate believers. In verse 17, they are characterized by richness in worldly goods, but are self-deceived for they are spiritually *poor and blind and naked*. This is a very good description of the apostate church. For all these traits, they are condemned.

1. The Definition of Apostasy

Apostasy can be defined as “the departure from the truth that one professed to have.” It does not mean that they actually possessed the truth. Seldom do apostates actually possess the truth. Rather, it is a departure from a truth they professed to have because of an affiliation with a particular church. For example, a minister of a Baptist, Presbyterian or Methodist church is professing, by virtue of his position, to believe the doctrines of the Baptist, Presbyterian or Methodist churches, respectively. But actually, the apostate denies these doctrines and has departed from the truth that he professes to have. This has indeed been the characteristic of the visible church in these decades of the 20th century.

2. The Certainty of Apostasy

That there would be an apostasy of the church in the latter days was clearly predicted in two New Testament passages. First, in II Thessalonians 2:1-3, Paul wrote: *Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*

In verse 2, the term *day of the Lord* is always a reference to the Great Tribulation period. In this passage, two things are to occur before the Tribulation can begin, one of which is *the falling away* (v. 3) The Greek word here is *apostasia*, which can be translated as “the apostasy.” Before the Tribulation is to begin, the apostasy must come first. Thus, it was inevitable that the church would become apostate in the closing days of its history. The second thing to occur before the Tribulation is

the revelation of *the man of sin...the son of perdition*.

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The second passage concerning the certainty of apostasy is I Timothy 4:1: *But the Spirit says expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.*

Again, the prophetic Word declares that there would be a falling away or an apostasy from the faith. The Laodicean church is a description of the apostasy of the last days.

3. The Character of Apostasy

In three New Testament passages, there is a description of the character of the apostasy. The first is found in I Timothy 4:1-3, continuing here from above with verses 2-3: *through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth.*

In verse 1, this passage declares that the source of apostasy is *demons*, for apostates have essentially given in to *seducing spirits* and are preaching a system of doctrine, which is the *doctrines of demons*. Furthermore, in verse 2, they *speak lies* through hypocrisy, and their conscience has become insensitive. And in verse 3, part of this demonic doctrine involves an attack on the liberty of the believer, characterized by *forbidding to marry* and the instructing to refrain from eating meats. Such legalistic apostasy will increase as church history unfolds throughout the last days and these elements will become more prevalent in the visible church.

The second passage relating to the character of the apostasy is found in II Timothy 3:5: *holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof: from these also turn away.*

In verses 1-4, there is a description of the general characteristic of the world during the last days, and it can hardly be denied that these elements are true in this present day. But verse 5 centers on the religious front where the characteristics of the last days will be men having *a form of godliness, but* [denying] *the power thereof*. Apostate ministers, retaining the clerical garb and church titles, have *a form of godliness, but* [they have] *denied the power thereof*, for they have denied the true power of godliness.

The third passage is found in II Peter 2:1-22. As one reads through this lengthy passage, he does not see Peter displaying any attitude of love or tolerance towards apostates. The Bible is not tolerant toward apostasy and castigates it very severely as these verses clearly show.

4. The Teachings of Apostasy

Having described the character of apostasy, another question involves their teachings. What, after all, is the mark of the apostate? In II Peter 2:1, their teachings are portrayed as destructive denials: *But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers,*

who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

The teachings of the apostates are called *destructive heresies*. The content entails *denying even the Master that bought them*. In other words, the content of apostate teaching involves the denial of the Person and work of Yeshua the Messiah.

Other New Testament passages give us more specific aspects of this denial. First, a denial of the Trinity is dealt with in I John 2:22-23: *Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denies the Father and the Son. Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: he that confesses the Son has the Father also.*

Secondly, I John 4:2-3 comments on a denial of the Incarnation: *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already.*

The same is true in II John 7: *For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

Thirdly, the denial of the Second Coming of the Messiah is the concern of II Peter 3:3-4: *knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

Thus, the teachings of apostasy involve the destructive denials of the Person and work of Yeshua the Messiah, especially with regard to His place in the Trinity, His deity, His Incarnation as the God-Man by means of the Virgin Birth, and the fact that He is coming back physically. Basic to all these denials, of course, is the denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures themselves. Once a person moves away from the acceptance of the authority of Scripture, there is no longer any safeguard for other crucial doctrines.

5. The Deeds of Separation of Apostasy

In Jude 17-19, the deeds or types of actions preferred by apostates are given: *But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

One type of deed that will be performed by apostates is mockery (vv. 17-18). They will mock the Fundamentals of the Faith; such as the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the Virgin Birth, the substitutionary death of the Messiah, and His physical Resurrection from the dead. II Peter 3:3-4 states that they will also mock the doctrine of the Second Coming of the Messiah.

A second deed is that of creating schisms or *separations* (v. 19). Because they begin denying some of the Fundamentals of the Faith, they convince some but not others. In the course of time, the two factions develop into a split within the church. The process begun by mockery results in a division of the church. Throughout this Age of Apostasy, there has been schism after schism. Church after church and denomination after denomination have split over the destructive denials of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Second Coming of the Messiah.

These characteristics, heretical teachings, and deeds of separation have become more prevalent as church history has progressed from about 1900 to the present day. This is the age of the church of the apostasy.

D. The Exhortation

The exhortation in Revelation 3:18-20 is a call to salvation. First, they are urged to seek spiritual wealth in the Messiah. Secondly, because they are spiritually naked, they are urged to receive the *white garments* of salvation from the Messiah. Throughout the Book of the Revelation, the *white garments* represent and symbolize salvation. In Revelation 3:4, these garments are on people considered worthy. In Revelation 3:5, they are coupled with not being blotted out of the Book of Life. In Revelation 6:11, they are seen as the garments of the saints in Heaven. In Revelation 7:9, 13-14, the garments are white because they have been washed in *the blood of the Lamb*. The key problem in the Laodicean church is that they are spiritually naked and lack salvation. Therefore, they are urged to appropriate it from the Messiah. Thirdly, because they are spiritually blinded, they are urged to seek the Messiah's *eyesalve* so that they can begin to see spiritually. There is no indication that this is a saved church. While all the other churches have had at least a small saved element in it, this church has none whatsoever. Hence, there is a complete absence of commendation for it.

Verse 20 emphasizes that the Messiah is outside the church, knocking. The Messiah is not in any way within the church, for it is a totally unsaved church. The exhortation is to any individual in the apostate church to hear the Messiah's voice and open his heart to Him, and then the Messiah will enter and they will have fellowship. It is another exhortation to salvation.

E. The Promise

The promise is in verses 21-22. The one who overcomes the problem of apostasy and accepts the Messiah is promised a share in the Messianic Kingdom.

The greater part of this church will find itself in the Tribulation period. However, the overcomer will receive a portion in the Millennium, while the others receive a portion in the Tribulation.

F. The Believer's Responsibility Regarding Apostasy

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In concluding this study of the apostasy, a question should be asked: What is the believer's responsibility in the face of apostasy? The Scriptures outline this responsibility in three areas.

First, believers are not to fellowship with apostates. On this point, there has been too much extremism. It must be kept in mind that an apostate is not merely an unbeliever, nor is he merely a member of an apostate church. The apostate is one who is actively propagating within the local church the destructive denials of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the deity of the Messiah, and the Second Coming. The apostates that the Bible speaks of are not merely unbelievers; they are teachers of apostate doctrines who propagate their destructive denials. That the believer is not to fellowship with such an individual is spelled out in II John 7-11. So if someone fits the description portrayed here, fellowship is forbidden, even to the point of not allowing him into one's home.

The second obligation concerns the apostate who is in the local church. If a member is found proclaiming a destructive denial, he is to be ousted from the church as Paul stated in Galatians 1:8-9. If anyone in the local church is found to be apostate, he is to be declared *anathema*, which means "untouchable." So, in relationship to apostates outside the church, the believer is not to fellowship with them. In relationship to apostates inside the church, they are to be ousted from the church.

But the third area of responsibility concerns the situation where apostates are in control of the leadership of the church and cannot be ousted. What should a believer do in this case? The obligation here is separation from the church, for he is to be separated from apostasy. In II Timothy 3:5, after characterizing apostasy as having *a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof*, Timothy is admonished from these also turn away. Timothy was urged to separate himself from such apostasy.

A more extended treatment of this problem is found in II Corinthians 6:14-7:1: *Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? for we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord, And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, And ye shall be to me sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

This is an important passage for it admonishes the believer to separate himself from the apostates and not continue to worship with them in the assembly.

Verse 14a has usually been used to refer to marriage between believers and unbelievers, but the context is dealing with a worship situation, not marriage. So worshipping with unbelievers is considered an “unequal yoke.”

Verses 14b-16a provide the reasons why this is an unequal yoke. Again, it must be kept in mind that this is in a context of worship. Five questions are asked which, in the Greek, demand negative answers. Five terms are given around which the reasons revolve: *fellowship*, *communion*, *concord*, *portion*, and *agreement*. There can be no fellowship between unrighteousness and *righteousness*. Believers are a part of righteousness, whereas unbelievers are part of *iniquity*, and there can be no fellowship between the two in the same church. Furthermore, there is no *communion* between *light* and *darkness*. Believers are of the *light*, but unbelievers are of the darkness; there is no common ground between the two. There can be no *concord* between the Messiah and Satan. They have two separate areas of operation; they have two distinct programs. The believer is part of the Messiah's program, while the unbeliever is part of Satan's program. The believer has no *portion* with unbelievers. One is destined for Heaven and the other is destined for Hell; their two destinies are very different and mutually exclusive. Finally, there is no *agreement* between the *temple of God* and the temple of an idol. The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but the unbeliever is not. Therefore, because there is no *fellowship*, *communion*, *concord*, *portion* or *agreement* in the area of worship, worshipping with an unbeliever is an unequal yoke.

In verse 16b, Paul gives the basis for separation; that is, that we are the *temple of God*. Since we are the *temple of God*, we are not to place ourselves in a worship situation with unbelievers.

In verse 17a, the command of separation involves three phases: first, *Come...out from among them*; secondly, *be...separate*; and thirdly, *touch no unclean thing*.

In verses 17b-18, a promise is given to those who comply and separate themselves. Just as there are three phases of separation, there are three statements of promises for those who obey: first, *I will receive you*; secondly, *I will be to you a Father*; and thirdly, *you will be to me sons and daughters*.

In II Corinthians 7:1, the passage concludes by urging the believer, on the basis of *these promises*, to follow through on his separation from apostasy where necessary.

Thus, when faced with apostasy, we are first, to have no fellowship with them; secondly, oust apostates from the church; or thirdly, separate from them if apostasy is in control of the church.

CONCLUSION

This concludes the discussion of the seven churches. As has been stated earlier, all seven churches can be found in every period of church history. Nevertheless, in the Historic-Prophetic interpretation, the dominant church today is obviously the Laodicean or apostate church. It can hardly be denied that the majority of churches today have given in to and become a part of the Age of Apostasy.✠

NOTES

