

## THE SEVEN LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

(Revelation 1-3)

[This is] the revelation of **Yahshua** the Messiah. God gave it to Him to disclose and make known to His bond servants certain things which must shortly and speedily come to pass in their entirety. . . Blessed is the man who reads aloud the word of this prophecy; and blessed are those who hear and who keep themselves true to the things which are written in it, for the time is near (Rev. 1:1a,3).

John to the seven assemblies that are in Asia; from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come, and from the seven Spirits [the sevenfold Holy Spirit] and from Yashua the Messiah the faithful and trustworthy Witness, the First-born of the dead and Prince of the kings of the earth. (4-5)

I, John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice like the calling of a war trumpet . . . write promptly what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia – to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea (10-11b).

These letters are sent to the churches representing their spiritual conditions in all epochs in which they existed from the time of A.D. 30 when Yashua had started His ministry, to the present time and beyond, when the Bride of Christ will be raptured.

**The Church of Ephesus** represents the time of the Apostolic Church in **A.D. 30-100**; the meaning of the church in Ephesus is first, desirable. This church represents the activities of the book of Acts from A.D. 33- 61-64, when the Christians were accused of burning Rome, and the martyrdom of Peter and Paul.

Yahshua commends it in verses 2-3, but He condemns this church for having **lost her first love** and exhorts it to "Remember from what heights you have fallen, Repent, or else I will visit you and remove you lampstand from its place". That meant God's judgment on this church would bring an end to it.

**The Church of Smyrna** is the church of the Roman Persecution during the period of (A.D. 100-313). This is a church of great faith amidst severe persecution under the Roman Empire, Diocletian; its meaning, bitter, represents the suffering they endured. To this church, Yahshua describes Himself as the First and the Last, and the One who was dead and lived again. In this description He comforts them, because of their suffering and possible future death due to persecution. Yahshua has nothing against the church of Smyrna, only commendation, encouragement and exhortation.

He commends them for enduring the blasphemy of those who claim to be Jews but they are not; He exhorts them to be courageous in face of death through persecution and He promises them eternal life through the first resurrection.

**The Church of Pergamum** represents the time of the Church of Constantine (A.D. 313-600). Its meaning is “earthly elevation”; Pergamum was built on a 1,000-foot hill in a broad, fertile plain, 20 miles from the Aegean Sea. This city was a major city of idolatry with many temples, in one of them was the temple of **Aesculapius, where was the home for an idol in the form of a serpent**; reason why Yahshua said it to be a place where Satan was enthroned. It was the first city to build a temple to Caesar. That’s when the Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, marrying Pergamum church to the state. This church is commended for not have denied the faith; however, Yahshua condemns them for two practices: for allowing the false teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Numbers 22-24). They are exhorted to repent, to clean up the church or else to go through judgment (tribulation). To the overcomer, Yahshua promises three things: hidden manna, (the food provided for the Israelites for forty years while they were in the desert); a white stone, which symbolizes a winner’s reward; the third promise is of a new name given a new name written on the stone which only he will know.

**The Church of Thyatira (600-1517)** was located between Pergamos and Sardis; it is considered the church of the Dark Ages, embodied in the Roman Catholic doctrine of continual sacrifice, namely the continual sacrifice of Messiah when partaking of communion of the bread and drinking of the wine. To this church, Yahshua described Himself as the Son of God, He alone worthy of worship; He commended them for their works of love, faith, and patience. However, they are condemned for tolerating the woman Jezebel, (possibly a symbol of religious entity). The religious practices of Jezebel describe the state of the Church of Thyatira, as Balaam describes the state of the Church of Pergamum. **Jezebel then is the picture of the Roman Catholic Church in the period of the Dark Ages.** During this period of time the following false doctrines were introduced into the Catholic Church:

1. **Justification by works**
2. **Baptismal regeneration**
3. **Worship of images**
4. **Celibacy- forbidding priests to marry**
5. **Confessionalism –declaration of absolution of sins by the priest**
6. **Purgatory- a place of confinement where one has to be refined before going to heaven**

- 7. Transubstantiation – the continual and perpetual sacrifice of Yashua**
- 8. Indulgences – through money a person's time in purgatory is reduced**
- 9. Penance- the torment of the body to reduce time in purgatory**
- 10. Mariolatry – the worship of the Virgin Mary.**

In His exhortation, Yashua told those who are not involved in the Jezebel's teachings, to hold fast to that which is pure; and promised them authority in the Messianic Kingdom; and the Morning Star.

**The Church of Sardis** represents the Church of the Reformation (1517-1648) when Martin Luther posted the Ninety-Five theses refuting the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The Reformation brought corrections to the promulgated wrong doctrines by the Catholic Church, however after they broke away from the Catholic Church, they became a state church. Yahshua told this church, "I know your record and what you are doing; you are supposed to be alive, but you are dead. Rouse yourselves and keep awake, and strengthen and invigorate what remains and is on the point of dying; for I have not found a thing that you have done meeting the requirements of My God or perfect in His sight" (Rev. 3:1-2). So the church of Sardis was a dead church; basically populated by unredeemed people. The spiritual success exists only in the obedience to the foundation of Yahshua's teachings, without it the church will die. He left these promises to those who are over comers of the deadness of the church: their names will **not** be blotted out of the Book of Life; He will acknowledge them as His and He will confess their names before His Father and His angels.

**The Church of Philadelphia** represents the Church of the Great Missionary Movement in the period of A.D. 1648-1900. From 1700 through 1900 doors were opened all over the world for the preaching of the Gospel. That was the period of great missionary names like Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma, William Carey, missionary to India, Hudson Taylor missionary to China and many others. Like the Church in Smyrna, Yahshua had nothing against this church. It is commended for recognizing the open door and making use of it in obedience to the command to go and tell the Good News to all. This church had little power, yet it was used to accomplish God's purpose for man. It was also in this period that some 250,000 Jews became believers in Yashua. He promised this church salvation from the Great Tribulation, He also promised them that they will serve as a pillar in the Temple of God and that the name of God, the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, and His own name will be written on them. They were exhorted to continue with the good work that they were doing, and to hold fast what they have.

**The Church of Laodicea** represents the church of the apostasy in the period of 1900 –present day. When, in the first century of Christianity, the Believers had lost their “First Love”, there was then an open door for the beginning of the apostasy to be planted in the churches. Apostasy is an abandonment of what one believed and when a Christian abandons the love that saved him, he abandons the root and the foundation of His faith. Yahshua exhorted us to remain in Him, remain in His teachings, for without Him we can do nothing and be nothing in the calling to be holy as He is holy, in the obedience to go and bear fruit for the kingdom of God. The apostate church of today- the Laodicea Church, has her deep roots in the abandonment of the “First Love” –from the Apostolic Church; she has the pagan roots of Constantine Church- the Church of Pergamum; the tolerance of Jezebel’s teachings (the Catholic Church) from the Church of Thyatira and the deadness of the state Church-the Sardis Church. Today’s church - the Laodicea Church, is the reflection of the failures of Christianity throughout her history. Yahshua found nothing commendable in the Laodicea Church, as it is seemly an unsaved church; the lukewarmness of this church is a reason to believe that, for we do understand that the temperature hot symbolizes the true believer

In Yahshua; and the temperature cold symbolizes the unbeliever and he is aware of it; however, in the lukewarm temperature, the person is dead in Christ, and because he is deceived, he does not know it. Yahshua says to them, “I know your works and what you are doing; you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot”! Laodicea Church is financially prosperous and not in need of anything, so they think. However they are described as spiritually poor, blind and naked. He exhorts this church to come to salvation, to seek the spiritual wealth in the Messiah; they are urged to receive the white garments of salvation from Yashua, for these are the righteous acts of the saints; He stands outside of Laodicea Church, knocking at her door. He desires fellowship with them, if only they would open the door for Him to come in and have fellowship with them, and they with Him and that through salvation! God calls the believer out of the Laodicea church. He says, “Come out from among them; be separate; touch no unclean thing. Paul warns us of the apostasy of the church in the latter days in II Thess. 2:1-3; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim.3:5; as do Peter and John in these passages: II Peter 2:1-22; I John 2:22-23; 4:2-3; II John 7. The apostasy church is the church that will be left behind when Yashua will come to save His bride from the Tribulation. Yashua’s letters to the seven Churches embrace all epoch of time with warnings, commendations, exhortations and instructions how to be prepared through the knowledge of what is to come.

Source: The Footsteps of the Messiah