



24 Hours Through the Bible*

*Primarily sourced from 'Learn the Bible in 24 Hours', by Dr. Chuck Missler, and *The Analyzed Bible*, by G. Campbell Morgan

Hour 23

The Mystery Kingdom and Its Review: Matthew 13 & Revelation 1-3

Primarily sourced from Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum

The Parables of the Mystery Kingdom

The 'Mystery' Kingdom

A. Definition

- The Greek word that is used for "mystery" is very much like the English word: 'musterion'.
- It is the Greek word from which the English word "mystery" originates.
- The origins of the word is from the Greek root, 'mueo', which means "to shut," as in 'shutting the eyes'.
- Thus, the root meaning has the concept of "one who shuts his eyes."
- As he shuts his eyes, he begins to meditate and things are revealed to him.
- In classical Greek, which preceded the Greek of the New Testament, it had the basic following meanings:
 - "a hidden thing," "a secret ceremony," "a secret teaching," "a mystery," "secret rites,"
 - Or instruments of the teaching connected with them.

In New Testament Greek, the meaning is both technical and simple

- It refers to something that was totally unrevealed in the Old Testament
- Only revealed in the New Testament.
- For something to qualify as a New Testament mystery
- It must be something totally unrevealed anywhere in the Old Testament.
- If it is knowable from the Old Testament, it is not a mystery.
- A mystery, then, is something only knowable from the New Testament.

The above definition is derived from six key passages.

- In **Matthew 13**, Jesus introduces the Mystery Kingdom
- In verse 11, Jesus mentions the **mysteries of the kingdom**.
- In verse 35, He said, **I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world**.
- Hence a mystery is something hidden since the foundation of the world.

Mysteries in The Gospels

- It is only used of the Mystery Kingdom in the Gospels.
- In Matthew 13:11 **the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**;
- In Mark 4:11, **the mystery of the kingdom of God**; and in Luke 8:10, **the mysteries of the kingdom of God**.
- In these contexts, the Kingdom in its present church age form is co-existing with evil.
- These passages also emphasize the inability of unbelievers to understand the Kingdom terminology in parabolic form.

The Understanding of the Mystery

- How can we really understand this new revelation, unrevealed in the Old Testament?
- When Jesus talked about the Mystery Kingdom (Mat. 13:10–17)
- He stated that the mysteries of the Kingdom were not given to be understood by unbelievers
- But only by believers by those believers who are willing to 'hear and understand'.
- This requires discipleship and thus discipline of study.

There are nine parables of Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 that describe the nature of the Mystery Kingdom.

(1) The first parable is The Parable of the Sower—Matthew 13:1–23 and interpreted in 13:20–23

Matthew 13:1 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

2 And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.

4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.

5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.

6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.

8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,

And seeing you will see and not perceive;

15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,

Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them.'

16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear;

17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.

This parable is interpreted in 13:20–23

- Per Mark 4:13, understanding the first parable is the key to understanding all subsequent parables
- The motifs laid down in the first parable—which Jesus Himself interprets
- Becomes the key to understanding the other parables.

20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.

22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

The Parable of the Sower makes four points

First, the Mystery Kingdom Age will be characterized by the sowing of the gospel seed.

Second, it will receive opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Third, it will be marked by different preparations of the soil.

-Perhaps some parts of the world are more responsive to the gospel than other parts.

Fourth, it is also marked by four different responses to the seed sown.

1-Is the **by the way side** response, which is the response of unbelief

-These hear the gospel but never believe.

2-Is the **rocky places** response.

-These hear the gospel, believe it, and are saved.

-However, they are never rooted in the Word of God, so they are never stabilized in their spiritual life.

-They are the ones who are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

-They are very experiential, but their experiences go up and down, so their spiritual life goes up and down.

-Because they are never rooted in the Word, they are never stabilized in their faith.

-While they are saved, they never produce the kind of fruit that believers need to produce.

-These need to leave the milk stage.

3-Is the **thorny ground** response.

-They also believe. However, they never seem to be able to overcome the cares of this world.

-They are ‘choked’ by the world and never seem to stabilize.

-Those who fall on ‘rocky places’ are not stabilized because they were never rooted in the Word of God

-The ones who fall among ‘the thorns’ may have a good knowledge of the Scriptures.

-They also may not be experience-centered

-However, they still seem to have difficulty living consistent spiritual lives

-Because they are up to their necks in the cares of the world.

-These may be family, financial, political, or social cares.

-As a result, they, too, are not stabilized and also do not produce the kind of fruit they should.

-These also never leave the milk stage, because meat is for ‘users, doers’ of the Word.

4-Is the **good ground** response.

-These are people who believe and are rooted in the Word of God.

-They overcome the world and, as a result, they are productive in the spiritual life.

-These are the ones who progress from milk to meat, and increase in fruitfulness.

(2) The Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself—Mark 4:26–29

26 And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground,

27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how.

28 For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.

29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Seed Growing of Itself (Mk. 4:26–29)

Makes two points:

First: the seed sown will spring to life of its own accord

-The seed has an inner energy, so that it will inexplicably produce regeneration.

Second: the springing to life does not depend on the sower

-Once he has sown the seed, there is nothing more to do.

-The gospel itself is the power of God that produces regeneration.

(3) The Parable of the Tares—Matthew 13:24–30

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

This parable is explained in 13:36–43

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

The Parable of the Tares Makes three points:

First: True sowing will be imitated by a false counter-sowing.

Second: There will be a side-by-side growth development as a result of the two sowings.

Third: The judgment at the end of the Mystery Kingdom will separate the two

-With the good harvest brought into the Messianic Kingdom and the bad excluded.

-This is the same as the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31–46.

-The essential character of each type of sowing can be known only by fruitfulness or fruitlessness.

(4) The Parable of the Mustard Seed—Matthew 13:31–32

31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

There are three points made in this parable:

First, the Mystery Kingdom will assume huge outer proportions

Second, the Mystery Kingdom will have an abnormal external growth until it becomes a monstrosity

Third, this monstrosity will become a resting place for birds.

-In the first parable, the birds were agents of Satan.

-Within this monstrosity of 'Christendom', will be various satanic elements

-Cultic groups that claim to believe in Jesus

-But deny something essential, such as His deity, His humanity

-Or the completeness of the cross regarding sin, all under the umbrella of Christianity.

(5) The Parable of the Leaven—Matthew 13:33

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

-A **woman**, when used symbolically, often symbolizes a spiritual or religious entity.

-This could be used positively or negatively.

-Here, woman is used negatively and refers to a false religious system.

-False religious elements will be introduced into the Mystery Kingdom resulting in spiritual fornication.

-**Leaven** is the symbol of sin (1 Cor. 5:6–8), and particularly in Matthew, the sin of false teaching (Mat. 16:6, 11–12).

-Thus, false teaching is introduced into the Mystery Kingdom.

-The three measures of meal depict Christendom eventually divided itself into three divisions:

-Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism,

-With all of them having a greater or lesser measure of false teaching.

-Others see the three measures picturing fellowship being corrupted by leaven and issuing in corruption and divisions

(6) The Parable of the Hidden Treasure—Matthew 13:44

44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

-The treasure is a symbol of Israel (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; Ps. 135:4).

-The point of this parable is that, while most of Israel rejected the Messiah

-Nevertheless God will gain a Remnant from Israel.

-The treasure, then, is the Remnant of Israel today (Rom. 11:5), the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

(7) The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price—Matthew 13:45–46

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

-While the Bible reveals that the treasure represents Israel

-It does not state anywhere exactly what the pearl represents when it is used symbolically.

-Knowing that Christendom includes both Jews and Gentiles

-Very likely the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

-Is "the other side of the coin" of the Parable of the Hidden Treasure.

-Since the treasure represents Israel, it is natural that the pearl would represent the Gentiles.

-The pearl represents the Gentiles in that the pearl comes from the sea

-And the sea symbolizes the Gentile world (Dan. 7:2–3; Rev. 17:1, 15).

-The pearl comes from the oyster, which itself was unclean in the Law of Moses

-But made clean by the Law of Christ.

This parable makes two points

First, there will be salvation also among the Gentiles.

Secondly, the Gentiles in the Church are formed by gradual accretion

- Just as a pearl develops when a speck of dirt falls into the oyster.
- The oyster begins covering this speck, and covering it, until, by gradual accretion, it becomes a pearl.
- This teaches the concept that the Gentiles in the Church are being formulated by gradual accretion.
- One of the primary purposes of the Church Age is:
 - Is ... **"to call out from among the Gentiles a people for His Name,"** (Acts 15:14)
 - This is to continue **"until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in."** (Rom. 11:25)
 - This is indeed pictured by this parable.

(8) The Parable of the Net—Matthew 13:47–50

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,

50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

- The **sea**, again, represents the Gentiles
- The point of the net is that the Mystery Kingdom will end with the Judgment of the Gentiles
- With the righteous brought into the Messianic Kingdom and the unrighteous excluded.
- This is the same as the Judgment of the Gentiles in Matthew 25:31–46.

(9) The Parable of the Householder—Matthew 13:51–52

51 Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?"

They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

- Which teaches that some aspects of the Mystery Kingdom
- Have similarities with the other facets of God's Kingdom Program
- Other aspects are brand new, never found before.

Summary of the Nine Parables

- The following summary provides the movement and development of the Mystery Kingdom

First parable (sower): there will be the sowing of the gospel seed throughout this age.

Second parable (seed growing of itself): this seed which has been sown

- Will have an inner energy so that it will spring to life of its own accord.

Third parable (tares): the true sowing will be imitated by false counter-sowing.

The next two parables are the results of the third parable.

Fourth parable (mustard seed): the Mystery Kingdom will assume huge outer proportions

- Until it becomes a monstrosity.

Fifth parable (leaven): it will be marked by inward doctrinal corruption.

The next two parables are the results of the first and second parables

Sixth parable (treasure): nevertheless, the Lord will gain a remnant from Israel.

Seventh parable (pearl): God will also gain a people from among the Gentiles

- Both the Jews and Gentiles together, 'the treasure' and 'the pearl', will form the Church.

Eighth parable (net): the Mystery Kingdom will end with the judgment of the Gentiles

- The unrighteous will be excluded from the Messianic Kingdom, and the righteous will be taken in.

Ninth parable (householder): the Mystery Kingdom has both similarities

-And dissimilarities with the other facets of God's Kingdom Program.

Distinctions from Other Facets of God's Kingdom Program

-The Mystery Kingdom must be distinguished from the other four facets of God's Kingdom Program

It is distinguished in five ways:

First, it is not the same as the Universal or **Eternal Kingdom**

-Because the Mystery Kingdom is limited in time

-From the rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus until the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus

-Therefore it is not eternal; furthermore, it is limited to the earth only, so it is not universal.

Secondly, it is not the same as the **Spiritual Kingdom**

-Because the Mystery Kingdom has both believers and unbelievers in it; it has both wheat and tares.

Thirdly, it is not the same as the **Theocratic Kingdom**

-Because it does not involve God's rule over Israel as a theocracy, and it includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Fourthly, it is not the same as the **Messianic Kingdom**

-Because Jesus is not ruling over the Kingdom from Jerusalem, but from Heaven.

-Furthermore, the Messianic Kingdom was no mystery

-Most of what is known about the Messianic Kingdom is revealed in the Old Testament.

Fifth, it is not the same as the Church. The Church is within the **Mystery Kingdom**

-It is the believing element, the wheat of God's Mystery Kingdom

-Including both the treasure and the pearl but it is not the totality of God's Kingdom Program.

-Replacement Theologians have invariably tried to make the Church and the Kingdom of God

-One and the same, but they are not.

-The Church is an aspect of God's Kingdom Program

-It is an aspect of both the Spiritual Kingdom and the Mystery Kingdom

-but it is not the totality of the Mystery Kingdom.

Focusing

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The Kingdom of God Program

Both the Old Testament and New Testament speak about the Kingdom of God. The basic meaning of the Kingdom of God is "God's rule." It is the sphere over which the sovereign God rules. Though there may be degrees of authority in different aspects of God's Kingdom Program, the basic meaning remains: God rules. There are three interrelated ideas in this concept: *first*, it includes the right to rule, the authority granted to one in order to be able to rule; *second*, it includes the realm of rule, the area in which the ruling authority is exercised, such as the subjects over which one rules; and *third*, there is the reality of rule, the actual exercise of royal authority.

There are two aspects to God's Kingdom Program: the *eternal* aspect and the *temporal* aspect. The eternal aspect is the heavenly rule; the temporal aspect is the earthly manifestation of the universal sovereignty of God—it is the realm in which God rules in the affairs of men. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is both spiritual and physical. There are different facets to God's Program. However, some have tried to describe the different facets of God's Program by making a distinction between the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven." The "Kingdom of Heaven" is defined as the eternal aspect, and the "Kingdom of God" as the temporal aspect. But that is simply not the way the terms are used. Actually, these terms are interchangeable. In fact, a look at the parallel Gospel accounts where the mystery is first found reveals that Matthew is the one who uses "Kingdom of Heaven" and he does so in the very same places where Mark and Luke use the "Kingdom of God." The reason Matthew uses the term "Kingdom of Heaven" is because his audience is a Jewish audience. Among the Jewish people, there was a special sensitivity to

using God's Name, let alone using the word "God" itself. For example, to this day, Orthodox Jews will not write out the word "God," but instead will write "G-d." The tendency in Judaism is to show respect for these terms by using a substitute. Instead of using God's Name, then, they will say *Hashem* (the Name) or *Adoshem* (the Lord of the Name); in place of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, they will say *Elokim*, changing the middle letter to avoid pronouncing the word. Often, rather than saying the word "God," they use the term "Heaven." This is common in rabbinic literature. Both the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, which make up the *Talmud*, use the term "Kingdom of Heaven," and by that they mean the same thing as the "Kingdom of God." So yes, there are different facets to God's Kingdom Program, but the different facets cannot be differentiated on the basis of these two terms. The terms themselves are used interchangeably for all the various facets.

There is one more thing to note about the Kingdom of God: it is multi-faceted. That is why there seem to be contradictory statements about the Kingdom. For example, Mark 9:1 states that they will see the Kingdom of God come with power, i.e., the Kingdom is something they will see. However, Luke 17:20–21 states that the *kingdom of God comes not with observation: neither shall they say to you, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.* According to the first passage, the Kingdom will come with power and it will be quite visible; according to the second passage, it cannot be seen, or it does not come with observation. Which is it? The answer: It is both. There are no contradictions in the Word of God. The point is that God's Kingdom Program is multi-faceted. In total, there are five facets. Four of these facets were already known in the Old Testament; the fifth facet is the mystery that is only now revealed in the New Testament.

What happened between Matthew 13 and Revelation 2 & 3?

- In between the formation of the church and the Mystery Kingdom in its totality
 - With the church within the Mystery Kingdom and in the World, the 'field'
 - And Jesus' Report card on Seven representative earthly churches
 - All originally within modern day Turkey
 - We have the Apostolic Epistles dealing with the church in the midst of its greater Christendom structure
 - Paul, Peter, James, Jude and John wrote to many of the churches dealing with
 - With the issues of Christendom, the world and they themselves, the true church in Christ.
 - How did these churches do since their formation and after the circular letters of the Epistles were distributed?
 - Exhorting them to not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of their minds in Christ?
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Revelation 1-3

Morgan on Revelation on chapter 1:19

- The only satisfactory introduction to the book of Revelation is found in the text thereof
- Which deals with authorship, nature, origin, method, and intention.
- Its earliest phrase constitutes its title, and indicates its content.
- It is the **"unveiling of Jesus Christ."**
- The key to the interpretation of the book is found in the final charge of Jesus to John, **19 "Write therefore the things which you saw, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass after these."**

Basic Outline of the Book

- There is first a Prologue (1:1–3)
- Followed by an Introduction (1:4–8)

Then follow the three divisions dealing with the unveiling of Jesus Christ

- Jesus Christ Himself (1:9–20)
- Jesus Christ and the Church (2, 3)
- Jesus Christ and the Kingdom (4–22:5)
- The book closes with an Epilogue (22:6–21)

The Prologue (1:1-3)

- Constitutes a key to the book as it declares its nature to be that of the unveiling of Jesus Christ
- Its origin: God gave the things to His Son to unveil and its method
- He signified them by an angel to John.
- It closes with a double blessing pronounced upon those who read, and hear, and keep.

Introduction (1:4–8)

- The apostle introduced his writing of the message received with a double benediction
- Grace and peace to the churches, and glory and dominion to Jesus Christ.
- He then declared that the hidden One is yet to be revealed
- And pronounced the Divine name in all its majesty: 1:8 **“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

Jesus Christ himself (1:9–19)

- The first division deals with what Christ referred to by the phrase, **“the things which you saw.”**
- The apostle described the occasion of the coming to him of the unveiling.
- As to earthly conditions, he was in Patmos in tribulation
- As to his heavenly condition, John was, **“in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.”**
- In these circumstances he beheld the vision of the glorious person of his Lord, as **“a son of man,”**
- Yet infinitely removed from all the sons of men in the splendor of His glory.
- In the presence of so amazing an unveiling John became **“as one dead,”**
- He then heard the voice bidding him, **“fear not,”** and ultimately commissioning him to write.

Dr. Arnold

The Mystery of the Seven Stars and Seven Golden Lampstands—Revelation 1:20

- The Mystery of the Seven Stars and Seven Golden Lampstands, as found in Revelation 1:20
The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels messengers of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.
- The mystery here is the fact that the seven individual lampstands symbolize the seven local churches.
- In the Book of Revelation, the lampstand represents witness (i.e., 11:3–4).
- Each local church is to be a witness, and if it fails to do so, then the lampstand can be removed (2:5).

Jesus Christ and the Church

- There can be no doubt that the seven letters contained in this division
- Were directed to churches actually in existence in the days of John.
- Nevertheless they reveal a seven-fold condition
- Lasting through the dispensation of the Church Age and indicate a prophetic process in Church history.

The Eschatology of the Visible Church: the Things Which Are—the Seven Churches

- Revelation chapters two and three comprise the second major division of the book.
- This division is **the things which are:** the seven churches.
- It is a description of the Church Age contained in seven short letters to the seven actual local churches.

Characteristics

-There are several characteristics found in these seven churches that should be noted.

First, these are all messages of Jesus to the churches

-They are His last audible statements given in the Scriptures.

Second, they involve the visible church rather than the invisible Church

-Composed of all true believers since Pentecost.

-But the visible church is the local body or local church, which may have both believers and unbelievers.

-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.

Third, Jesus has something against five of these churches and nothing against two.

-Furthermore, He finds something good in six of these churches but nothing good in the seventh church

-The seventh church is entirely outside of His favor.

Fourth characteristic is that there are four common things in all seven letters.

The first thing in common is that every letter has a description of the Christ

-Taken from the description of the Glorified Son of Man found in chapter one.

-Then each description is somehow related to what follows in that particular letter.

-Chapter one gives a complete description of the Glorified Son of Man.

-Each one of these letters then 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 Jesus is intimately aware of the earthly state of every local church.

The third statement common to all seven letters is: **he that overcomes**,

-Followed by a promise which is somehow related to the particular nature of that church.

The fourth and final common statement in all seven letters is the statement:

-he that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

-It is an admonition to obedience.

-All seven churches are to take heed to their own letter and anything applicable from the other six

Interpretation

The key question is, how are these letters are to be interpreted?

-There are statements made in these letters that can be true only of the individual church.

-On the other hand, there are statements that can hardly be limited to that particular church

-Seemingly particular local situations sometimes cannot be true of the local church 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 real churches to whom John was writing.

-They were seven literal churches existing in John's day, but not thruout church history.

-They were also seven different types of churches that existed at that time.

Second: 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.

There is a general consensus on the first two points among premillennial writers

- This is not true with the third issue
- Which is known as the 'historical-prophetic interpretation'
- Which states that while all seven types of churches always exist
- One type dominates (but is not exclusive to) 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.
- The seven present a prophetic picture of seven historical eras wherein the visible church will develop.
- These letters are being written to **the seven** churches, representative of the whole of Christendom.

Why these seven? These seven were chosen:

First, because of the particular meaning of their names

Second, all seven are located near each other so that their letters can be passed on easily

- Plus showing that in a small area these seven can exist near each other

Third, the situations of a particular local church will be characteristic of a future church era

- Certain statements made to individual churches cannot be true of the strictly local situation
- Therefore they must have a far wider meaning.

The question this third perspective raises is:

- Does this view not 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 is only local
- And 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, or only of that type of church, then the answer would be: "No."

- We would prefer to limit the interpretation to that church only or to that type of church only

- But statements are made in chapters 2 and 3 which render a local only interpretation 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.'

-Also to the church of Thyatira, which also does not physically exist today, Jesus said in: **2:22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into 'great tribulation' (only used of Rev. 6-19), unless they repent of their deeds.**

- The time is long past that these promises could only be kept regarding those particular local churches
- For these local churches no longer exist
- Hence, the historical-prophetic interpretation does have strong merit though it is not without problems.
- Furthermore, it is the literal interpretation of such promises that has moved us to this position
- Using the Historical Grammatical method of Hermeneutics
- The corresponding church eras seem to line up in exact order with these seven churches in Rev. 2&3

As each of these letters will be studied, all three points will be presented.

- One can conclude that these seven letters do not actually survey seven periods of church history
- But all seven types are here now, and will be up to the Rapture
- Because we are still **'in the things that are'**, the church age
- The church age!

The seven letters all follow a basic outline containing six items:

Destination
Description of Jesus
Commendation
Condemnation
Exhortation
Promise

- Not all seven letters have all six points of the outline, nor are they necessarily in that order.
- But this is the basic structure of each letter.

The Mystery Kingdom's Report Card

The Seven Letters

1. Ephesus:

The Apostolic Church (A.D. 34–100)—Revelation 2:1–7

- 1 "To the ~~angel~~ messenger of the church of Ephesus write,
'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:
2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;
3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.
4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.
5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.
6 But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
7 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." '

The destination (v. 1a) of the letter is Ephesus, which means "desired."

- It represents the period of the Apostolic Church which began in A.D. 30 and continued to about A.D. 100,
- The time of the death of the last Apostle, John, the author of the Book of Revelation.
- Ephesus was the type of church that typified the Apostolic Church.

The description of Jesus (v. 1b) taken from Revelation 1:13, 16, and 20.

- It points to the control He has over the destiny of the churches.

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 of false teachers coming to despoil the church.
 - By the time Paul wrote the books of 1 and 2 Timothy
 - False teachers had arrived and were causing corruption in the church (1 Tim. 1:3–4, 18–20; 6:3–10, 20–21; 2 Tim. 2:14–18; 4:1–4).
 - These false teachers created havoc, and Timothy was somewhat discouraged
 - When Paul gave him some advice as to how to handle the situation.
 - By the time this letter was written in Revelation 2, the Church at Ephesus had overcome the problem
 - And having resisted the false teachers, and they are commended for it.
- Second**, they are commended for hating the work 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 an unnatural distinction
- Between the clergy and the laity, creating a division where the clergy exercised rulership over the laity.
- Certainly, elders have 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 for it.
- The word servant was not exercised in 'servant leadership'

The condemnation is found in verse four

- They have lost their first love, referring to love of the Messiah and love of the Word.
- The second generation of believers has grown lax and has become cold.
- They did not have the fervor or fire of the first generation; hence, the condemnation.
- A similar problem is seen in the recipients of the letter to the Hebrews
- A group of second generation Jewish believers who, due to persecution
- Had grown lax and, hence, had lost their first love.

The exhortation is found in verse five

- 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.

The promise is found in verse seven

- While the letters are addressed to the churches as a whole
- The promises are all to individuals in the church who overcome the problem of the church as a whole.
- 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 Him.

Historically in this era

- This is the letter to the Church of Ephesus and it is relevant to that particular church.
- Certain truths of this local church were also true of the apostolic church in the second generation era.
- In the historical-prophetic interpretation
- This is the type of church that dominated the first period of church history

2. Smyrna

The Church of the Roman Persecution (A.D. 100–313)—Revelation 2:8–11

8 "And to the angel messenger of the church in Smyrna write,

"These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." "

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. 19:39–40).
- Thus, in the historical-prophetic interpretation, this church becomes a fitting symbol
- Representing the second period of church history,
- That of the Roman persecution from about A.D. 96 to 313.

The description of Jesus is in verse 8b, and it is taken from Revelation 1:17–18.

- He tells the church that He is the First and the Last, and that He Himself died and lived again.
- Although He died violently, yet He lives again because of the resurrection.
- Many of these people will also die violent deaths

The commendation is found in verse nine

First, they are commended for having patience in sufferings.

- They are examples of what the Book of Hebrews tells its recipients that they need: patient endurance.

Second, they are commended for enduring the blasphemy of those who claim to be Jews

- These claimants are not and are of the 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.

There is **no condemnation**

- Smyrna is one of the two churches that Jesus had nothing against

The exhortation is in verse ten, and concerns three things.

First, they are urged not to fear the things that they are about to suffer

Second, he warns them that they are about to suffer persecution for a period of ten days.

- In all probability, this refers to ten literal days of persecution in the local situation
- And that there was a ten-day period in which many suffered and died.
- For this, too, we simply lack the historical confirmation
- We do not have a complete record of church history in this period of time or of that particular church.

From the historical-prophetic interpretation, some have noted that between the years A.D. 96–313

- There were more than ten Roman emperors, only ten of them officially persecuted the church:
Domitian (96), Trajan (98–117), Hadrian (117–138), Antonius Pius (138–161), Marcus Aurelius (161–180), Septimius Severus (193–211), Maximin (235–238), Decius (249–251), Valerian (251–260), and Diocletian (284–305).
- These ten Roman emperors might be representative of the ten days of persecution
- However, in the Book of Revelation, time increments: days, months, or years, are always quite literal
- It is best to take these ten days as being the same.
- Even if one accepts the historical-prophetic interpretation
- It is best to limit this to those parts that cannot be true of that local church or only that local church.

Historically this church may represent the second period of church history

- But the ten days should probably remain only ten days and not ten periods of time.
 - However the years 96-313 AD is an era of great overall persecution for the church at large.
- Third**, they are exhorted to not fear death, for if they die as martyrs; they shall secure the crown of life.
- Although they may die violently once, they will not die the second time, which is the second death.

3. Pergamum

The Church of the Age of Constantine (A.D. 313–600)—Revelation 2:12–17

12 “And to the ~~angel~~ messenger of the church in Pergamos write,
‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." '

The destination of the letter is in verse 12a, to Pergamum, which means "thoroughly married"

- It was a major city of idolatry with many temples
- One of which was the temple of Asclepius, containing an idol in the form of a serpent.
- This may be what Satan's throne refers to.
- In the historical-prophetic view, it is the church of the age of Constantine
- That saw the church married to the state.
- In 313, Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official state religion of the Roman Empire
- And thus the church was married to the state.

The description of Jesus in verse 12b is taken from Revelation 1:16.

- This description is one of judgment, especially of that exercised by Jesus, the Word of God.

The commendation is in verse 13.

- They are commended for not denying the faith
- Singling out one of their faithful Antipas, who suffered martyrdom for his witness.
- Nothing more is known of Antipas, yet this gives us a small hint of what occurred 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 is said to be dwelling where Satan himself dwells
- Where, Asclepius the serpent-son, was worshiped.

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 teachings of Balaam.

- Balaam, in Numbers 22–24, was a seer of Mesopotamia.
- He was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, in league with the Midianites
- To pronounce a prophetic curse on Israel.
- Although on four different occasions he 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.
- The teaching of Balaam was encouragement to 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 believers to accept social engagements probably meant some involvement with pagan practices
- Apparently many believers compromised.

Historically 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 regard to personal faith.
- By simply being baptized, they were able to join the new establishment.
- As a result, pagans entered the church bringing many of their pagan practices with them.
- Idolatry entered the church as these people added Jesus 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 teachings of Balaam.

Second, In verse 15, they are condemned for permitting the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

- The very group that Ephesus was commended for not tolerating
- Pergamum was condemned for tolerating and encouraging.
- 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 that further corrupted
- And laid the foundation for what was to follow in the next phase of the Church Age.

The exhortation is found in verse 16.

- They are exhorted to repent (change their minds) and to clean up the church or it will be judged.

The promise is in verse 17, and it is threefold:

First, the one who overcomes is promised hidden manna.

- Manna in the Old Testament was the food provided for the children of Israel
- When they departed from the land of Egypt sojourning in the wilderness for forty years
- 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 for his sustenance.

Second, 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 by God.

Third, the 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).

4. Thyatira:

The Church of the Dark Ages (A.D. 600–1517)—Revelation 2:18–29

18 “And to the ~~angel~~ messenger of the church in Thyatira write,
 “These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.
 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.
 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.
 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.
 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.
 24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.
 25 But hold fast what you have till I come.
 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—
 27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—
 as I also have received from My Father;
 28 and I will give him the morning star.
 29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The destination in verse 18a is the Church of Thyatira, which means “continual or perpetual sacrifice.”
 -In the historical-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 Jesus (called: transubstantiation)
 -And so He 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 was fully developed

The description of Jesus is found in verse 18b, and is taken from Revelation 1:14–15.
 -They are symbols of judgment.
 -It is He Who is the Son of God, and He alone is to be worshiped.

The commendation is in verse 19.
 -They are commended for their works of love, faith, ministry, and patience
 -And these works were increasing.
 -They were characterized by good works and so their external appearance was positive.

The condemnation is lengthy in verses 20–23.
 -In verses 20–21, the condemnation involves the toleration of a woman named Jezebel.
 -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
 -Furthermore, Thyatira was not located in Phoenicia, but in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).
 -It is statements like this that lend credence to the historical-prophetic interpretation.

The woman Jezebel
 -Often 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 Christ.

- On the negative side, there is the woman with the leaven (Mat. 13:33)
- The Great Harlot of chapter 17, and here, the woman Jezebel.
- Most likely this is an Old Testament reference to Jezebel describing the state of the Church in Thyatira
- Just as Balaam was used to describe the state of the Church in Pergamum.

Historically Jezebel

- Was a Sidonian princess who became the wife of Ahab, the king of Israel (1 Kg. 16:29–33).
- She introduced 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, its first king.
- There was a difference between the sin of Jeroboam and the sin of Baal worship introduced by Jezebel.
- The sin of Jeroboam was a corruption of the true religion, a false representation of Jehovah
- Jeroboam set up the golden calves in Dan and Bethel
- 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 (1 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 1 Kings 12:28 are a quotation of Aaron's words in Exodus 32:4.

But with Jezebel, it was not merely a corruption of the true religion

- A whole new god and system of worship were introduced in Israel (1 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.
- Jezebel became a picture of what the Roman Catholic Church evolved into during the Dark Ages.
- It introduced a paganism that resulted in idolatry and spiritual fornication
- 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

1. Justification by works—Not simply by grace through faith
 2. Baptismal regeneration—That a person is saved by baptism
 3. Worship of images
 4. Celibacy—Forbidding priests to marry, a further distinction between clergy and laity
 5. Confessionalism—Where sins are confessed to a priest who then declares absolution of those sins
 6. Purgatory—A place of confinement which is neither Heaven nor Hades,
-A place of spiritual/moral refinement before going into Heaven, and so sanctification was not complete at death
 7. Transubstantiation—The concept of the continual and perpetual sacrifice of Jesus
 8. Indulgences—Where through the giving of money, a person's time in purgatory could be reduced
 9. Penance—Involving the torment of one's body in order to reduce time in purgatory
 10. Maryolatry—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 of Jezebel

- In verse 22, the woman is to be cast into the Great Tribulation.
- This means that unlike the true Church
- The Jezebel 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 named 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 religious system can this be true.
- 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.

The exhortation is found in verses 24–25

- The exhortation involves those who are not part of the Jezebel system
- Who do not know the deep things of Satan.
- The Roman Catholic Church must be viewed as Satan's counterfeit.
- In the exhortation to those who are not involved in Satan's counterfeit, but may be found in it
- 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.
- In the context of the Dark Ages, this stand took tremendous spiritual courage and energy.

The promise in verses 26–29 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.

Second, 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, Jesus Himself is declared to be the Morning Star.
- Thus, they will possess Jesus.
- The possession of the true faith presupposes a possession of the Person of the Messiah.

5. Sardis:

The Church of the Reformation (A.D. 1517–1648)—Revelation 3:1–6

"And to the angel messenger of the church in Sardis write,

'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

6 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." '

The destination of the fifth letter in verse 1a is Sardis, which means "those escaping."

- In the historical-prophetic interpretation, it represents the Church of the Reformation
- Which began in earnest 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 about 1700.

The description of Jesus in verse 1b 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.

No commendation

The condemnation in verse 1c.

-They have a name that lives, but actually they are dead.

Historically

-This is a valid description of the church of the Reformation as it developed in its later generations.

-They had a name that lived: the Reformation resulted in much doctrinal correction and good creeds.

-Some of the wrongs and the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church were corrected by the Reformation.

-The different churches developing in the Reformation had good creeds and good biblical doctrine.

-Nevertheless, they were spiritually dead; there was no spiritual vitality.

-Over time they became dead because they failed to rectify a basic problem-

-Which was the unity of church and state and membership therein thru infant baptism

-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.

-Reformers failed to correct the problem of church and state unity, and membership thru infant baptism

-Therefore, it eventually became a dead church.

Infant Baptism

-Because of the existence of state churches

-Children born in a given locality were simply baptized and by this became members of the church.

-Personal faith had little or nothing to do with becoming a member of the church.

-Over time, the greater part of the church was composed of unregenerate members.

-The churches all had good, solid creeds

-Except that they were still bound to Replacement Theology and Catholic Eschatology

-So it appeared that they were living churches.

-But they were dead. There was no spiritual life because of the lack of personal faith

-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.

The exhortation is found in verses 2-3.

-In verse two, 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 faith based spiritual life is dead.

-Both are, therefore, necessary.

-In verse three, the point is made that deadness will result in Jesus' coming unexpectedly unto them

-This to is an indication that these letters are not just local

-A church with spiritual life will not be surprised when Jesus returns for the Church.

-But a dead church will be caught unaware because they will not be expecting Him: immanency!

-And as unbelievers, they shall be left behind.

-In verse four, there is the encouragement to "those escaping."

-Their garments are undefiled and white.

- Hence, these are the ones who have exercised faith, who do have spiritual life
- And who have overcome the deadness of the church.

The promise in verses 5–6 is threefold

First, they will have white garments.

- 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 righteousness and salvation.

The first promise to the escapees is salvation; for them the good doctrine is not dead, but alive in Jesus.

The second promise is that their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life.

- But this promise also involves their salvation, which will be eternally secure
- Because their names will not be blotted out.
- It is a promise of eternal security.

The third promise is that the name of the believer will be confessed by Jesus before the angels.

6. Philadelphia:

The Church of the Great Missionary Movement (A.D. 1648–1900)—Revelation 3:7–13

7 “And to the ~~angel~~ messenger of the church in Philadelphia write,

“These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on 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 I will write on him My new name.

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

The destination (v. 7a) is the church in the city of Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love.”

In the historical-prophetic interpretation

- It is a fitting symbol of the church during the great missionary movement from 1700 through 1900.
- It was a period of great missionary names like Hudson Taylor, Adoraim Judson, William Carey, et al.

The description of Jesus in verse 7b is taken from Revelation 1:18

- Picturing Him as the One with authority to open and close doors.
- This is the second church for which there is no condemnation.
- Like Smyrna, Jesus finds nothing against this church and is satisfied with it.

The commendation is found in verse eight.

- They are commended for making use of the open door.
- It is Jesus Himself Who opened the door
- During the period of 1700–1900 there was virtually no place 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.
- Their little power was used to accomplish great things. They are commended for it.

The promise found in verses 9–10 and 12–13 is fourfold.

- First**, in v.9, they are promised fruit amongst 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; 2:23) when Israel is on the sideline of God's program
- And considered to be 'not my people', they have been set aside, but not forever.
- In the future they will again become 'my people' (Hos. 1:10–2:1; 3:5).

Historically

- It is interesting to note that it is during this time that Jewish missions came into its own
- By 1900 some 250,000 Jews became believers.
- 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 regrafted into their own Olive Tree.
- It is more likely that this verse deals more literally with those who claim to be Jews, but are not.
- This is the age that saw the rise of cults, such as Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science et al
- One common element among cults is to claim to be the "real" Jews
- By declaring themselves to be the 144,000 Jews or the ten lost Tribes of Israel, etc.
- Nevertheless, the Philadelphia Church will win converts among these as well.

Second, in verse 10 the promise is: they will not go into the Great Tribulation period.

- Suffice it to say that 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 historical-prophetic interpretation.

Third, in verse 12, the promise is that they will serve as a pillar in the Temple of God.

- 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
- The promise then would be that they will have a share in the Millennial Temple during the Kingdom Age.

Fourth verse 13 the promise is that they will have on them three new names:

- The name of God, the name of Jerusalem, and the new name of Jesus.

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

7. Laodicea:

The Church of the Apostasy (A.D. 1900–present day)—Revelation 3:14–22

14 "And to the ~~angel~~ messenger of the church of the Laodiceans write,

'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' ' "

The destination of the letter, in verse 14a, is Laodicea, which means "people ruling"

-This is set in contrast to God ruling His church.

-It is a church entirely ruled by men, for the Holy Spirit is not present and doing His ministry of guiding.

-In the historical-prophetic interpretation, this becomes an avid description of the Church of the Apostasy

-Which began in the early 1900s and continues to the present day.

The description of Jesus is in verse 14b, and is taken from Revelation 1:4, 6, and 7.

-He is described as the faithful and true witness, but this church is neither faithful nor true to the Word.

No commendation for this church

-There is nothing commendable in this church

Condemnation

-Hence, the text continues immediately 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.

-Hot and cold are commended by Jesus, 'I would that you would be either hot or cold'

-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 also self-deception

-They are spiritually poor, blind, and naked.

Apostasy can be defined as the departure from the truth that one professed to have.

-Seldom do apostates actually possess the truth.

-Rather, it is a departure from a truth they professed to have because of a church affiliation

-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 of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

-Apostasy of the church in the latter days was clearly predicted in the New Testament

Scriptural Examples of Predicted Apostasy

1 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.

New Testament passages describing the character of the apostasy

1 Timothy 4:2–3:

2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;

3 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.

-This passage declares that the source of apostasy is demons who have spread false doctrines

-Apostates have given in to seducing spirits and are preaching doctrine which is a doctrine of demons.

-Furthermore, they speak lies through hypocrisy, and their conscience has become insensitive.

-Part of this demonic doctrine involves an attack on the believer's liberty

-Characterized by the forbidding to marry and the instructing to refrain from eating meats.

-Such legalistic apostasy will increase as church history unfolds throughout the last days.

-These elements will become more prevalent in the visible church.

2 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 character of the world during the last days

-And it can hardly be denied that these elements are true in this present day.

-Verse five centers on the religious front

-The last days will be characterized by 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 therein, for they have denied the true power of godliness.

Focusing

Dr. Arnold

The teachings of the apostates which 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 (the Master) and work (bought them) of the Messiah.

-Other New Testament passages provide more specific aspects of this denial.

First, a denial of the Trinity is dealt with in 1 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.

Second, 1 John 4:2–3 comments on a denial of the Incarnation:

Hereby know you 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 you have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already.

The same is true in 2 John 1:7

For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ comes in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Third, the denial of the Second Coming of the Messiah is the concern of 2 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 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.

Inspiration Denied

-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.

The roots of the present Age of Apostasy began in Europe

- Particularly with German rationalism
- Where the inerrancy of the Scriptures was denied
- With the development of biblical criticism and the documentary hypothesis.
- If the present Age of the Apostasy had a definite beginning (and this is impossible to determine)
- In the United States, it might well have been January 20, 1891.
- On that day, a man named Charles Augustus Briggs gave his inaugural address at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City.
- At that time, Union was a Presbyterian seminary training ministers for Presbyterian pulpits.
- In his inaugural address, Briggs made six points, some of which involved destructive heresies:
First, there are three great fountains of truth: the Bible, the church, and reason,
-Thus, reason and the church became equal in authority with the Scriptures
Second, not only were some of the Old Testament prophecies not fulfilled, but they were also reversed
Third, he questioned the Mosaic authorship of the five books of Moses
Fourth, he questioned the unity of Isaiah
Fifth, he stated that those who died unsaved would have a second chance
Sixth, sanctification is not complete at death.

Focusing

Dr. Arnold

Briggs was not the first Modernist

- But this address was the first public affirmation of Modernism in a theological seminary in the United States.
- Charges were brought against Briggs by the New York Presbytery on two occasions (1891 and 1893)
- But the charges were dropped
- Mainly to preserve the unity of the church rather than to deal with what was actually said.
- When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church put Briggs on trial in 1893
- He was suspended from the Presbyterian Church.
- As a result, Briggs became an Episcopalian, and the Union Theological Seminary
- Withdrew from the Presbyterian Church and became independent.
- However, although the Union Theological Seminary became independent
- They still continued to train ministers for the Presbyterian Church and for their pulpits.
- This set the stage for the way the apostasy would develop in the course of the twentieth century.
- Apostasy would first begin in a denominational school
- And thus affect the training of ministers who were to fill the pulpits for those denominations.
- Eventually, more and more liberals took over the pulpits
- And more and more churches became liberal themselves.

- So throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century
- Apostasy took over the schools and trained ministers for the denominational churches.
- In an effort to stem the tide, in 1910 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
- Issued the Five Fundamentals of the Faith, which included:
First, the inspiration of Scriptures
Second, the Virgin Birth
Third, the substitutionary atonement
Fourth, the resurrection of Jesus
Fifth, the miracles of Jesus.
- Those who subscribed to these five points were labeled "Fundamentalists," and a new word was coined.
- Those who denied these fundamentals were called Modernists or Liberals.

-The General Assembly issued these in 1910 and reaffirmed them in 1916 and 1923.

The decade of the 1920s was characterized by the great Modernist-Fundamentalist battles.

-There were many attempts to fight Modernism from within the church.

-But toward the end of the decade, it became apparent that the Modernists

-Were firmly in control of both the denominational church positions

-This included all the major denominations except the Southern Baptist Convention and their schools.

-This led to the separatist movements of the 1930s as the Fundamentalists pulled out of denominations

-Either by starting new denominations or by forming independent churches.

-Emerging from the United Presbyterian Church of America was a group led by J. Gresham Machen

-Which unfortunately split into three separate denominations:

-Orthodox Presbyterians, Bible Presbyterians, and the Evangelical Presbyterians

-Due to internal struggles.

-Out of the American Baptist Convention came the General Association of Regular Baptists (GARB).

-Out of the United Methodist Church came the Evangelical Methodists.

-The schisms that the Bible predicted would occur as a result of the apostasy

-Began to occur in the separatist movements of the 1930s.

The 1940s to the present day have been characterized by ecumenical movements

-In 1948, the World Council of Churches was organized on two principles:

First, the unity of all churches on the basis of liberal tenets

Second, the unity of all religions.

-In 1950, the old Federal Council of Churches was reorganized into the National Council of Churches

-Again attempting to unify all the churches in the United States along liberal tenets.

-Consequently, the visible church is primarily apostate today.

-Even among conservative denominations, some can already see the threat of apostasy

-in the taking over of the schools and the supplying of liberal ministers for the pulpits.

-Even the once strong Southern Baptist Convention has not escaped this trend.

-However, to their credit, there was a reversal of this trend in the decade of the nineties.

In more recent times, a whole new phase has entered the apostasy.

-The old phase was characterized by destructive denials.

-The new phase claims to affirm the fundamentals of the faith

-But they have made a paradigm shift in that the Bible is no longer

-The final authority in determining divine truth

-But experience is equally valid. In actual practice, the experience takes priority over the Scriptures.

-If the Bible contradicts the practice, then the practice is justified as being "a new move of the Spirit"

-And therefore, what the text of Scripture actually says can be contradicted by a new experience.

-This is a far more "spiritual" way of denying the truth of God and, therefore, far more deceptive.

-The old apostasy was marked by verbal "destructive denials."

-The new apostasy is marked by practical "destructive denials."

-This, in turn, has led to many strange and diverse doctrines

-causing many to be truly tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and resulting in spiritual instability

-as Paul warned would happen in Ephesians 4:8-16.

-They may affirm the authority and inspiration of Scripture, but it is only their experience

-That determines the meaning of the text in particular and truth in general.

-The new apostasy has produced the same fruit as the old apostasy.

-They mock those who will not join the "new wave" (or is it being caught in the undertow?)

-And they have caused schisms dividing both churches and families.

Focusing #2

Missler: Revelation 1-3

"He Shall Glorify Me" John 16:14

-Old Testament Christ in Prophecy

-Gospels Christ in History

-Acts Christ in the Church

-Epistles Christ in Experience

-Apocalypse Christ in coming Glory

"He" = Holy Spirit... When Jesus cries, "It is finished," He is closing out the Levitical requirements of the Torah...

Revelation: "The Unveiling"

-The Consummation of all things.

-The only book promising a special blessing to the reader.

-404 verses containing over 800 allusions from the Old Testament.

-It presents the climax of God's Plan for Man.

To Whom Given?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by his angel unto His servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Revelation 1:1,2

Unto whom? ...Rendered into "signs" (sememes).

A Unique Promise

Revelation 1:3

Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 1:4,5

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the Seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

1) And the Spirit of the YHWH shall rest upon him,

2) the Spirit of Wisdom

3) the Spirit of Understanding,

4) the Spirit of Counsel

5) the Spirit of Might,

6) the Spirit of Knowledge

7) and the Spirit of the Fear of the LORD.

From: Isaiah 11:2

Revelation 1:6

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Vision in Chapter 1: Seven Features

1) Hair; head: Dan 7:9

2) Eyes: Heb 1:13; 4:13 Flame of fire 1 Cor 3:13; Mal 3:2

3) Feet: symbol of walk; brass = judgment [cf. Brazen serpent] Num 21

4) Voice, many waters Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; Dan 10:6
5) Right Hand: 7 stars, lampstands: in the midst; in His hand
6) Mouth: two-edged sword: Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17; Isa 49:2; Judges unbelievers Jn 12:48; Earth smitten Is. 11:4; Antichrist consumed 2 Thes. 2:8
7) Countenance, Sun: Mt 17
Cf. Programmer's "Data Declarations." These "descriptors" will be used as identities throughout the rest of the Book.

The Divine Outline: Revelation 1:19

Write the things which you have seen,

The Vision of Christ, Chapter 1 and the things which are, The Seven Churches Chapters 2, 3 and the things which shall be hereafter; Which follows after the Churches Chapters 4-22
"hereafter," "after these things" = meta tauta.

The Key(s) are Self-Contained

Revelation 1:20

The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: And the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

The Seven Churches: **"The Things that Are"**

Why these seven? Why not Jerusalem? Antioch? Rome? Lystra? Iconium? Et al... ["He that has an ear..." 7X elsewhere.]

- 1) Local: actual churches. Researched archaeologically by Sir William Ramsey.
- 2) Admonitory: "...churches": all of them. Each message applies to each, to some extent.
- 3) Homiletic: "He that has an ear..." Applies to us.
- 4) Prophetic. In their particular order, they lay out the history of the church. [They fill the gap implied in Daniel 9:26, and between Rev. 12:5 and 6, etc.]

Design Elements In Each of the Letters to 7 Churches

- Name of the Church.
- Title of Christ Chosen.
- Commendation.
- Concern.
- Exhortation.
- Promise to the Overcomer.
- "He that has an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

Letter to Ephesus Revelation 2:1-6

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; [Title of Christ] These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands; [Commendation] I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you canst not bear them which are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: And have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have labored, and have not fainted. [Concern] Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. [Exhortation] Remember therefore from whence you art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your lampstand out of his place, except you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Nicolaitans: hated here, but became “doctrine” in Pergamos (Letter #3)] Is their lampstand visible today? One of “the seven” chosen to have the oversight of “the daily ministration” to the poor of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). He is called “a proselyte of Antioch”; (the other 6 were therefore probably Jews by birth). Some of the church Fathers (Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Pseudo-Tertullian) state that he was the founder of a sect called NICOLAITANS. Other Fathers seem to suggest that this was a vain claim made by this sect in seeking apostolic authority for their opinions.

-A 1st century sect abusing the liberty in Christ?

-An untranslated word?

-Nicao Conquer, overcome, rule.

-Laos Laity; people.

-Using their clerical stature or position to rule over the laity; Cf. Washing of feet (John 13).

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; [Promise to the Overcomer] To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7

-Notice that the “Promise to the Overcomer” comes after the “He that has an ear” phrase.

Letter to Smyrna Revelation 2:8-11

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; [Title of Christ] These things says the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; [Commendation] I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but you art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. [Exhortation] Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; [Promise to the Overcomer] He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

Notice that the “Promise to the Overcomer” comes after the “He that has an ear” phrase. Born twice, die once; born once, die twice.

10 “Days” (spans 250 years??) of Tribulation

54 - 68 Nero (Paul beheaded; Peter crucified upside down)

95 - 96 Domitian (John exiled)

104 - 117 Trajan (Ignatius burned at the stake)

161 - 180 Marcus Aurelius (Polycarp martyred)

200 - 211 Septimius Severus (He killed Irenaeus)

235 - 237 Maximinus (He killed Ursula and Hippolytus)

249 - 251 Decius

257 - 260 Valerian

270 - 275 Aurelian

303 - 313 Diocletian (Worst of all)

Letter to Pergamos Revelation 2:12-16

“Mixed Marriage” [bigamy =two; polygamy = many].

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; [Title of Christ] These things says he which has the sharp sword with two edges; [Commendation] I know your works, and where you dwells, even where Satan’s seat is: and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. [Concern] But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So have you also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

[Exhortation] Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

The Prophet Balaam

- “Doctrine of Balaam.” Rev 2:14
- Spiritual unchastity; marriage with the world.
- “Way of Balaam.” II Peter 2:15
- Hireling = making a “market” for his gift.
- “Error of Balaam.” Jude 11
- Sacrificing eternal riches for temporal gain.

Revelation 2:17

He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; [Promise to the Overcomer] To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he that receives it.

Notice that the “Promise to the Overcomer” comes after the “He that has an ear” phrase.

Letter to Thyatira Revelation 2:18-22

And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; [Title of Christ] These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; [Commendation] I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first. [Concern] Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Cf. Elijah at Mt. Carmel... Queen Jezebel: 1 Kings 21

- King Ahab desires Naboth's vineyard.
- Queen Jezebel arranges an Inquisition: false witnesses; condemnation; execution.
- Naboth's vineyard seized for the king.

Revelation 2:23, 24

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. [Exhortation] But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which you have already hold fast till I come.

Revelation 2:26-29

[Promise to the Overcomer] And he that overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Letter to Sardis Revelation 3:1-3

“Remnant...” [Note: there is no “commendation” in this letter!]

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; [Title of Christ] These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; [Concern] I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and art dead. [Exhortation] Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.

Revelation 3:4-6

You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. [Promise to the Overcomer] He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches. "name" (or "denomination") is all through this letter...

Letter to Philadelphia (brotherly love) Revelation 3:7-13

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; [Title of Christ] These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; [Commendation] I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and 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 have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. [Exhortation] Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.[Promise to the Overcomer] Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

-No expression of "concern"! The only letter with a promise of keeping them out of the time of the "Great Tribulation."

Letter to Laodicea ("Rule of the People") Revelation 3:14-22

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; [Title of Christ] These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; [Concern] I know your works, that you art neither cold nor hot: I would you wert cold or hot. So then because you art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: [Exhortation] I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you mayest be rich; and white raiment, that you mayest be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that you mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke 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. [Promise to the Overcomer] To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.

Prophetic Profile? The Seven Kingdom Parables

Revelation 2 & 3 Matthew 13

Ephesus	• The Sower and 4 Soils
Smyrna	• The Tares and the Wheat
Pergamos	• The Mustard Seed
Thyatira	• The Woman & the Leaven
Sardis	• The Treasure in the Field
Philadelphia	• The Pearl of Great Price
Laodicea	• The Dragnet

Seven Churches

Jesus Paul

Ephesus • Ephesus

Smyrna • Philippians

Pergamos • Corinthians

Thyatira • Galatians

Sardis • Romans

Philadelphia • Thessalonians

Laodicea • Colossians

Prophetic Profile?

