

# The seven churches in



**A**mong the interesting prophetic chains in the book of Revelation, that tell the history of our age, are the letters addressed to seven churches, together with the seven seals and seven trumpets. Chapters 2 and 3 describe the history of the church during 2000 years. There are praises, reproaches and advices given to the church at different times, but their spiritual application is projected to each one of us.

Once again, the main character is Jesus: *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man... And he had in his right hand seven stars...”* Revelation 1:12, 13, 16.

**1. The prophetic vision that John receives in the island of Patmos is very impressive. He sees Jesus walking among seven golden candlesticks. What does this mean? What period of time does it refer to? Revelation 1:19-20.**

a) *“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches ..... which thou sawest are .....”*

- ✓ In Asia Minor there were many cities with Christian churches. God chose seven names, the church in seven cities as a representation of seven ages of Christianity. We understand that the seven churches represent the history of God's church in seven periods. Its history can be studied and proved.
- ✓ Christ's church is one, from Eden to the restored earth, but it went through many stages. We could divide these seven stages in the following way:

EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMOS	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADELPHIA	LAODICEA	
31	100	323	538	1517	1798	1844	END

- ✓ Jesus has seven stars in His hand. The text says these are the angels of the church to whom the message is addressed. Who are those angels? The word angel in Greek is *aggeloi* and it can be also translated as messenger, which is many times applied to human beings. (Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 2 Corinthians 12:7).
- ✓ According to Malachi 2:7, these are the priests, teachers and leaders of the church, who bear the responsibility of God's flock. While they remain with Christ and His word, He holds them in His hand and guides them, but if they separate from Him He rejects them and chooses other ones. (Romans 11:19-22).

## The Message to the 7 churches

**2. What message was given to the church in the period of Ephesus? Revelation 2:1-7 We can identify 5 important aspects:**



- a) *How is Christ presented? Verse 1.*
- b) *What praises does He make the church? Verse 2-3.*
- c) *What is His rebuke? Verse 4.*
- d) *What counsel does He give it? Verse 5.*
- e) *What promises does the church receive? Verse 7.*

- ✓ During the first century of Christianity, from 31 to 100, while the apostles still lived, it was a time of growth for the church. The doctrine was kept pure. Christ introduces Himself to this church as the one who *“holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”* This means He is the Founder and the leader of the church and He does not ignore the struggles of His people. He is always with them.
- ✓ The praise of the angel to the leadership of the church is that he knows *“thy works, and thy labor”*, the way they worked to spread the gospel and He praises it for being able to discern between truth and error. The rebukes, counsels and promises given to this church are also for us. Ephesus means *“Desirable”*.

**3. Second period of the church – Smyrna. Revelation 2:8.**

- ✓ **Time of persecutions by the Roman Empire.** Christians were cast in the arena. Believers found shelter in the catacombs (underground corridors in Rome) and in loneliness.
- ✓ **Duration:** Between the years 100-313. From the death of the apostle John to the last edict of tolerance of Milan, when the Roman emperor Constantine, grants freedom to Christians. Meaning of Smyrna: *“Myrrh”* or *“Soft perfume.”*

**What is the message to this church? Revelation 2:8-11.**

**a) How does Jesus introduce Himself and why?**

*“El ..... the last, which was dead, and is alive.”*

- ✓ For the martyrs of that time of hard persecutions, Jesus was the first one and the last one. They died with the hope of resurrection, because Jesus is alive.

**b) What praises does the church receive? *Jesus knows* .....**

- ✓ **This church receives no reproach** because it remained faithful in time of persecution. Jesus knew its material poverty, but the Lord tells them that they are spiritually rich.
- ✓ **The prophecy said that they would be persecuted ten days** (each day counts for a year) that is to say they were persecuted during 10 years. Between the years 303-313, Diocletianus and his successor Galerio, made a bloody campaign to uproot Christianity.

**c) Promise: Verse 11 *“He who overcometh* .....**

**4. Third period of the church: Pergamos Revelation 2:12**

- ✓ **Time of compromise.** The church that had remained faithful under persecutions, surrenders to the political pressure of emperor Constantine. The church becomes one with the state. Pagan customs

are introduced into the church and the Bible is ignored. Meaning of the word Pergamos: "Height" or "Elevation".

- ✓ **Duration:** Between the years 313-538 (The bishop of Rome gets the supremacy).

## **What is the message to the church of Pergamos? Revelation 2:12-17.**

### **a) How does Jesus introduce Himself and why?**

*"These things saith he which hath ..... edges."*

- ✓ **The Bible is compared to a double-edged sword.** (Hebr. 4:12). In this time of compromises, the Bible was set aside, but Jesus reminds the believers of this period that He has the Scriptures and takes care of them.

### **b) What praise does the church receive?**

*"thou holdest fast ..... hast not denied my faith."*

- ✓ **A remnant remains faithful,** It is separated, outlawed and banned. (C.S. 49).

### **c) Rebuke: "So hath thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans".**

- ✓ The analogy with Balaam (Numbers 22-24) predicts that there would be persons, at the time, that **would try to divide and destroy the church** by introducing customs that were prohibited among Christians. The Nicolaitans was a Gnostic sect that taught that the works of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul and they have nothing to do with salvation.

### **d) Call and promise: (verses 16-17) "..... or else ....."**

- ✓ In the old times, a white stone was exchanged among friends with their names so that their descendants could identify them and keep the bonds of friendship. This is a symbol that the faithful believers in Jesus are guaranteed His friendship and acceptance.

## **5. Fourth period of the church: Thyatira, Revelation 2:18**

- ✓ The church of the wilderness in the Middle Ages. The believers do not submit to the official religion and are persecuted by the Inquisition. It means: "Sweet aroma of work"
- ✓ **Duration:** Between the years 538-1517. (Until the Reform)
- ✓ What is the message to the church of Thyatira? Revelation 2:18-29.

### **a) How does Jesus introduce Himself and why? "The Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto ..... and his feet are like fine brass"** Christ reminds us that He is the Son of God, the only One who has authority (verse 27) and can forgive sins. He will judge the persecutors of the Inquisition.

### **b) Praises: "I know thy works, and charity..... thy patience."**

### **c) Rebuke: "Thou sufferest ..... to teach and to seduce my servants."**

- ✓ Jezebel, the wife of king Achab, led Israel to worship Baal. In that way, the leaders of faithful groups were seduced to accept anti-biblical practices and apostasy from the truth.

### **d) A faithful remnant: Verse 24 "But unto you I say, ..... in Thyatira"**

- ✓ The faithful ones separate and flee to the mountains and solitary places. (C.S. 69, 127).

## **6. What is the message to the church of Sardis? Revelation 3:1-6.**

- ✓ The time of the Reform in the XVI century. The Bible reaches the people and revives the faith.
- ✓ **Duration:** Between the years 1517-1798. It means: "Song of joy."

### **a) Jesus introduces Himself as: "He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."**

- ✓ Jesus offers the plenitude (7) of His Spirit to produce repentance. This is the symbol of His supreme sovereignty. Seven stars: He wants to lead His church.

### **b) Rebuke: "Thou hast a name that thou ..... and art dead."**

- ✓ It is a protestant name, but they do not protest any more. When the reformers pass away, the churches become conformists.

### **c) A faithful remnant: Verse 4. "Thou hast a few .....in Sardis which have not defiled their garments"** Revelation 3:4.

- ✓ Again the believers separate. Wesley brings a spiritual revival.

## 7. Sixth period of the church: Philadelphia. Revelation 3:7.

- ✓ There is a world movement that preaches the second coming of Christ.
- ✓ Duration: Between the years 1798 - 1844.

### What is the message to the church of Philadelphia? Revelation 3:7-13.

- a) Jesus introduces Himself as: *"He that hath the key of David ..... and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."*
- ✓ Jesus is the holy One, the only One who can save us through His righteous life. He has the key -access- to the Most Holy Place. He enters there to intercede for us.
- b) Praise: *"for thou hast a little streng..... my name. (Verse 8 l. p.)."*
- ✓ Philadelphia means brotherly love. In this period the Bible Societies are founded, and missionary attempts in the Far East and Africa are made. The second coming of Christ is powerfully preached. (William Miller, Bengel. S. Wolf, Lacunza en Chile, etc).

## 8. Seventh period. What is the message to the church of Laodicea? Revelation 3:14-22.

- ✓ It is the last church of our times.
  - ✓ Laodicea means: The people of the Judgment.
  - ✓ Duration: 1844 until Christ's second coming. This is the last church.
- a) Jesus introduces Himself as: *"the Amen ..... witness".*
- ✓ Amen means: "Let it be so." As a witness He cannot be bribed. He is not deceived with words. Jesus, the Creator, is honest.
- b) **The diseases of Laodicea:** *"It ..... (v.16) is believed ..... (v.17)*
- c) **Remedies:** *"..... tested in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, white..... and anoint your eyes ....."*



- ✓ God counsels us through His Word and offers us the "refined gold", which represents faith and love. He also gives us the "white railent", which is the saving grace of the righteousness of Christ, and the "eye salve" that indicates the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we may see.
- ✓ He allows tests to come that make us reflect, and that is why the Lord says: "Be zealous and repent". Verse 20 shows that when Laodicean leaders and large numbers of members are "vomited", this does not mean that there is no more hope for anyone. As always in the history of His people, there is still a remnant who hears His voice and with whom the Lord wants to have communion.
- ✓ *There is a call for you! Jesus wants you to open the door of your heart. You will do it?*

Name: .....

Address: .....