



Revelation 2

[WHEN AND TO WHOM DO THE MESSAGES APPLY?]

The messages to the seven churches apply to several periods:

1. To conditions in the church of John's day.
2. To the church as a whole through seven successive periods of Christian history.
3. To any individual at any time whose condition is described by any of the seven messages.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the message extends [from the beginning of the Christian church] to the end of time, while the symbol used reveals the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." AA 585. See also GC 309-310.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES REPRESENT SEVEN PERIODS OF THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE THROUGHOUT THE CHRISTIAN ERA

1. The messages to the churches may be understood as applicable to more than the local congregations. The end of each letter says "He who has an ear, let him hear..."
2. Seven symbolizes completeness indicating that these seven messages describe the complete history of the Christian church.
3. Christ is depicted as tending to just these seven churches and holding as precious in His hand their ministers, but as Christ tends to all His churches of all time, evidently these seven represent all.
3. The whole content of the book of Revelation was sent to the seven churches (Rev 22:16) and as the contents covers monumental events throughout the whole Christian era the churches evidently cover periods throughout the Christian era.
4. The seven churches were not all the churches in Asia minor but were apparently selected as being representative of the whole church.
5. That the messages fit remarkably well the consecutive periods of Christian history from Christ's time till the Second Coming is compelling evidence. The dates given in this commentary are approximate as periods blend.

The Seven Successive periods of the Christian Church								
Approx. period	30AD	100	313	538	1517	1750	1844	Second Coming
	<i>Ephesus</i>	<i>Smyrna</i>	<i>Pergamos</i>	<i>Thiatyra</i>	<i>Sardis</i>	<i>Philadelphia</i>	<i>Laodicea</i>	
Meaning of Name	Desirable	Myrrh	Elevation	Contrition	That which remains	Brotherly Love	A People Judged	
Summary of period	Church pure	Church Crushed by Pagan Rome	Church elevated to State Religion	Church corruption results in the Papacy	Protestant Reformation	Evangelical Revival	Judgment	

THE FORMAT OF THE MESSAGES

1. Christ introduces Himself in a way that is appropriate to the experiences of each church.
2. Christ commends any good.
3. Christ Rebukes any wrong.
4. Christ gives the remedy.
5. Christ promises a reward]

EPHESUS

1* ¶ Unto the angel [Gr. ‘Aggelos’ messenger. cf. Rev 1:20] of the church of Ephesus [Ephesus means desirable. It was the largest of the seven cities, a focal point of trade. It was home of the goddess Diana Act 19:28, 35] write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst [close caring concerned and ministering to keep the lights burning by providing the precious oil. His rebukes are to keep the flames burning] of the seven golden candlesticks;

2* I know thy [thy is singular. The whole church is here personified by the single angel (messenger) of the church] works [], and thy labour, and thy patience [From just 120 believers (Acts 1:15) to over six million in 69 years is testimony to their faithful witness. They burned with a desire to reach others. (See AA, 578-579)], and how thou canst not bear them which are evil [We are to “bear one another’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) but “abhor that which is evil.” (Rom 12:9).

After efforts to bring erring church members to repentance they must be disfellowshipped (Matt 18:15-17; Ps 101:3): and thou hast tried them [by God’s word. Isa 8:20; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1. cf. Acts 20:28-31] which say they are apostles [“Gr. apostolos, a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders. In a broader sense applied to other eminent Christian teachers” *Strongs Concordance*], and are not, and hast found them liars [Professed Christians who break God’s law 1 John 2:4]:

3* And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake [for the glory of Christ] hast laboured, and hast not fainted [for the glory of Christ.].

4* Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love [that initial desire to share & live the truth had gone from many. The mystery of iniquity (2 Thess 2:3-7) was at work. (See *Reflecting Christ*, p77)].

5* Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent [turn away from sin], and do the first works [confess & forsake one’s sin]; or else I will come unto thee

quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent [This removal would be particularly poignant to those of Ephesus because before John's time the city had been forced to move to keep up with its receding shoreline of its harbour, which eventually completely filled with silt (See William M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, p244-246)

See Appendix for a discussion of the Once Saved Always Saved Doctrine].

6* But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans [believers who thought that faith freed them from obedience - Antinomiansim. Adherents of a sect called Nicolaitans a century after John's time appear to have taught that the deeds of the flesh do not affect the purity of the soul, and consequently have no bearing on salvation.

(See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, i, 26. 3; Hippolytus *Refutation of all Heresies* vii. 24).

Also 7BC 957; Rom 3:31], which I also hate ["Thou [Christ] hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." Heb 1:9].

7* He that hath an ear, let him hear [understand:

Jer 5:21 "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not."] what the Spirit saith [The Holy Spirit.] unto the churches; To him that overcometh [the Greek implies continual overcoming] will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst [showing its importance] of the paradise of God [It grows either side of the river of life which flows from God's throne (Rev 22:1-2). The tree of life had been in the garden of Eden. It was apparently taken before the destruction of the world by the Flood.

EPHESUS AS PROPHECY

The early Christian church 31-100 AD.

Ephesus...a symbol of the entire Christian church in the apostolic age... (Rev 2:2-3 quoted)." AA 578.

Rebuked for having left their first love and for having tarnished zeal, they were praised for testing false teachers. Characteristics which well fit the early church period.

"they went everywhere preaching the word." Acts 8:14. "The gospel...was preached to every creature under heaven." Col 1:23.

"There is the strongest reason to believe that before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the faith of Christ had been preached in every province and in all the great cities of the empire."

Edward Gibbon, *Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 2, p65

Notice the exploits of the apostles themselves:

James: Son of Zebedee. Slain by Herod Agrippa 44 A.D. (cf. E.G. White, *Conflict & Courage*, p288)

Phillip: Preached the gospel in Upper Asia. At Heliopolis in Phrygia he was scourged, imprisoned and crucified in 54 A.D.

Matthew: Laboured in Parthia and Ethiopia where he was martyred in the city of Nadabah 60 A.D. by being slain with a halberd.

James the Less: A brother of Jesus, an overseer of the early Jerusalem church. At 94

years he was stoned by his fellow Jews and his brains were dashed out by a fullers club.

Matthias: Replaced Judas Iscariot, the traitor. Stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

Andrew: Peter's brother. Laboured in many Asiatic nations. on arrival at Edessa, Syria, he was crucified.

Mark: Laboured in Egypt. At Alexandria he was dragged to pieces by a mob of idolaters.

Peter: Laboured mostly for the Jews. Finally at Rome he was arrested during Nero's reign and crucified upside down.

Paul: The chief apostle to the Gentiles who laboured incessantly in promoting the gospel. Was beheaded by Nero about 68 A.D.

Jude or Thaddeus: Crucified at Edessa, 72 A.D.

Bartholemew: Laboured in several countries. Finally in India he was cruelly beaten and crucified by a mob of idolaters.

Thomas: Laboured in Parthia and India. Martyred by Hindu priests, by being thrust through with a spear.

Luke: Laboured with Paul in various countries. Tradition says he was hanged from an olive tree by pagan priests of Greece.

Simon Zealotes: Laboured in Maredania, Africa and Britain where he finally was crucified 74 A.D.

John: Laboured in Asia Minor. Arrested and sent to Rome where, at Domitian's command,

“ John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant.” AA, p570. The emperor then banished him to the lonely Isle of Patmos.

Barnabas: Claimed to have been martyred in 73A.D.

Nicodemus: Suffered death at Rome under Domitian

Timothy: Laboured in Ephesus until 97A.D. when he was clubbed to death by Pagan people. (See *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Forebush ed. p2-7).

‘Stephen was stoned; James was slain by the sword; Paul was beheaded; Peter was crucified; John was exiled. Yet the church grew. New workers took the place of those who fell, and stone after stone was added to the building. Thus slowly ascended the temple of the church of God.’ AA, p595-597.

SMYRNA

8* ¶ And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna [Probably derived from ‘muron,’ an sweet smelling aromatic gum ground to powder & burnt - myrrh. A picture of the saints of this period who, in their sufferings and martyrdoms, gave a sweet testimony to their faith.

From the Greek “smurna” AV - myrrh a bitter gum and costly perfume which exudes from a certain tree or shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia, or is obtained by incisions made in the bark: as an antiseptic it was used for embalming.” *Strong's Greek Dictionary*.

Myrrh was one of the gifts given to Christ by the wise men and is a symbol of suffering & death:

Gold - Kingship, Frankincense - Priesthood (Exo 30:8, 34), Myrrh - Sacrifice, suffering, death (Mark 15:23; John 19:39)] write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive [Christ's introduces Himself to this suffering church as one Who had

been through suffering and overcome death];

9* I know thy works, and tribulation [this church was persecuted], and poverty [literally abject poverty], (but thou art rich) [spiritually. Their treasure is in heaven] and [I know] the blasphemy [taking God's name but not His character] of them which say they are Jews [**THE REAL JEWS**]

Paul wrote: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither [is that] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he [is] a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the spirit, [and] not in the letter; whose praise [is] not of men, but of God." Rom 2:28-29.

"And if ye [be] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal 3:29. Therefore according to the Bible the real "Jews" are those who follow God, be they Jew or Gentile (See also: Rom 9:6-7; 1 Pet 2:9; John 8:31-44), and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan [Satan means accuser or adversary].

Polycarp, minister of the Smyrna church for 40 years, was burnt to death. Jews were foremost in requesting his death:

"Even though he was to be burned on the sabbath - the Jews were so anxious for Polycarp's death that they came in large numbers to the stadium bringing faggots for the fire in which Polycarp so magnificently died."

Dr. Edwin Thiele, *Notes on Revelation*, p 48].

10* Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer [terrible sufferig would befall them].

Tertullian, a church leader, wrote to the Romans,

"Kill us, torture us, grind us to dust...the oftener we are mown down by you the more in numbers we grow; the blood of the Christians is seed."

Tertullian of Carthage, *Apology*, chap. 50, quoted by T.G. Bunch in *The Seven Epistles of Christ*, p21]: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days [As the messages were applicable to the literal churches in John's day this may refer to ten literal days of persecution. It seems improbable that God would make a period of just 10 literal days a matter of prophecy. However, when we understand that the messages to the seven churches also describe seven periods spanning history between Christ's first & Second Advents, these 10 days are also seen to represent 10 years* of terrible persecution.

*A day may represent a year. See Eze 4:6; Num 14:34. See on Smyrna as prophecy]: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life [the crown will be given the believer at the Second Coming (2 Tim 4:8; 1 Cor 15:51-54; 1 Thess 4:16-17; 1 Pet 5:4) only if faith is maintained until death].

11* He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death [One must live a second life before one can die a second death. This verse therefore speaks of resurrection:

THE RESURRECTIONS

All men die the first death (Heb 9:27; 1 Cor 15:22; Rom 5:12), which is called a sleep from which ALL will wake (John 5:28-29). The saints will be woken at Christ's Second Advent in the "first resurrection" or the "resurrection of life" (Rev 20:6; John 5:29). The wicked will be woken 1000 years later in the second resurrection (Rev 20:4-6), only to suffer the "second death" in hell fire after the judgment. (Rev 20:4-6, 13-14). Thus hell

fire is not yet burning for the wicked have not yet lived a second time and have not yet therefore entered the second death.

2Pet 2:9 says, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished”].

SMYRNA AS PROPHECY

The Church under Pagan Roman persecution 100 -313 AD.

Loyalty under persecution.

Edwin Thiele, in his *Notes on Revelation*, p42-43, states that thirteen Roman Emperors initiated or supported the persecution of Christians:

1. Trajan 98-117 A.D.
2. Hadrian 117-138 A.D.
3. Antoninus Pius 138-161 A.D.
4. Marcus Aurelius 161-180 A.D.
5. Commodus 180-192 A.D.
6. Septimus Severus 193-211 A.D.
7. Alexander Severus 222-235 A.D.
8. Maximus 235-238 A.D.
9. Decius Trajan 249-251 A.D.
10. Gallus 251-253 A.D.
11. Valerian 253-270 A.D.
12. Aurelian 270-275 A.D.
- 13 Diocletian 284-305 A.D.

Emperor Trajan (A.D. 98 - 117) passed the first official policy against Christianity. If accused, Christians had to recant or die.

The 10 days of persecution in verse 10 represent 10 years (Num 14:34; Eze 4:6) of terrible persecution. Rome persecuted Christians most severely under the Emperor Diocletian.

1. Diocletian issued decrees for the overthrow of Christian temples in the Roman Empire.
 2. Issued decrees for the burning of the Christian Scriptures.
 3. Issued edits for the replacement of Christians who occupied positions of responsibility.
 4. Ordered that elders be imprisoned and tortured in order to force them to worship idols.
- Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Clarke's ed., p 34.

Some authorities claim that in Britain, under Diocletian's persecution, “all the Christian were utterly destroyed.” *Ibid*, p35.

The persecution begun by Diocletian lasted 10 prophetic days - 10 literal years, as the prophecy had foretold - A.D. 303 to A.D. 313 when Emperor Constantine granted Christians toleration.

See *Enc' Britannica*, Vol 4, 1989, p106 and Vol 3, p563.

In Gaul, a Roman legion of 6660 men had accepted Christ. The legion was ordered by the

emperor to attack Christians. They refused. They committed themselves to God with great joy encouraged by their leader Mauritius.

“He was summoned to the emperor and in his defence declared, ‘We are your soldiers, but also the servants of God...we will rather obey him than you...We offer our hands against any other enemy, but to defile our hands with the blood of innocents, that we may not do...behold we cast down our weapons and resist not, for we would rather be killed than kill; and die guiltless than live guilty...we are ready to suffer fire and sword and any other torments. We confess ourselves to be Christians; we cannot persecute Christians, nor will we sacrifice to your devilish idols.”

Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, Clarke’s ed., p 36-37.

The legionnaires made no resistance. They yielded their lives to their persecutors and were slain.

“They loved not their lives unto the death.” Rev 12:11.

Smyrna received no rebuke. Persecution keep the church pure. The hotter the flame the purer the metal. See GC 44]

PERGAMOS

12* ¶ And to the angel of the church in Pergamos [Pergamos probably meaning elevation or citadel due to the city’s location high on a mountain spur. Parchment was invented in Pergamos.

“Pergamos = height or elevation”

Strong’s Greek Dictionary] write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges [God’s word will either cut out sin or destroy the transgressor. This is very appropriate for a church powerfully tempted to turn from Christ. cf. Heb 4:12];

13* I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, [even] where Satan’s seat [is]: [An appropriate comment seeing that ancient Pergamum was the religious capital of Asia with many Pagan temples including the huge altar of Zeus and the temple of Aesculopius the healing serpent. It was a prominent centre for the worship of Bacchus the wine drinking god of revelry and Venus, goddess of love.

Most of all Pergamos was the seat of Babylonian sun worship. In 487 B.C., 50 years after the Persians conquered Babylon, the Chaldean system of sun worship was forced to flee from Babylon because of Persian hostility. They established their centre of worship in Pergamos independent of Persian control.

“The defeated Chaldeans fled to Asia Minor and fixed their central college at Pergamos and took the palladium of Babylon, the cubic stone, with them. Here independent of state control, they carried on the rites of their religion.” William B Baker, *Lares & Penates*, p232-233.

The original seat of Satan, which had been in Babylon (Isa 14:4, 12), had been moved to Pergamos. The kings of Pergamos adopted the Babylonian sun worship religion and assumed the title of Pontifex (Bridge builder) Maximus (Chief). In 133 B.C. Attalus III bequeathed the kingdom of Pergamos to Rome with all its offices, religious and political. Julius & Augustus Caesar were the first to assume the title of Pontifex Maximus. Later the Christian emperor Gratian (380 A.D.) rejected the title whereupon it was assumed by Pope Damasus and has ever since been one of the official titles of the popes. Pergamos is therefore the bridge between Babylon and Rome]: and thou holdest fast my name, and

hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas [From Gk. *Anti Pater*, meaning in place of or opposed to the father.

“...call no [man] your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” Matt 23:8-12 [was] my faithful martyr [“An old tradition claims that he was the bisop of Pergamum at the time of his death.” *SDA Bible Dictionary*, p51. There is no historical record of an individual martyr called Antipas. A class of people may be intended], who was slain among you [For honouring Christ in place of the corrupt church “fathers,” or opposing the corrupt church “fathers”], where Satan dwelleth [see on v 13].

14* But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam [a false prophet who formed a plan to lure Israel into sinful practices. Num 31:16.

The doctrines of Balaam leads to fornication: 2Pet 2:14-15 “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam [the son] of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”], who taught Balac [a pagan king who worked with Balaam to ruin Israel Num 22-24] to cast a stumblingblock [temptation] before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication [cf. Num 25:1-2. The prophets use adultery and fornication to describe spiritual & political alliances with non christian powers. See Eze 16 and 23].

15* So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans [Nicolaitans = “destruction of people”

Strong’s Greek Dictionary.

“The doctrine is now largely taught that the gospel of Christ has made the law of God of no effect; that by ‘believing’ we are released from the necessity of being doers of the word. But this is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which Christ so unsparingly condemned.” 7BC 957], which thing I hate [Christ hates iniquity (Heb 1:9) therefore the doctrine of the Nicolaitans clearly bred iniquity].

16* Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth [Chris’t word saves or destroys.

As those who led Israel to follow the ways of Balaam (Num 25), where slain so will it be again].

17* He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna [In place of things offered to idols, Christ’s will feeds His people His word, the true bread from heaven. (John 6:31-35, 57, 63). The overcomer will get to know that which is unknown or hidden to all others. They will have fellowship with Christ.

“...among the promises of blessing of God’s people in the future life it is written, ‘to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.’”PP, p297], and will give him a white stone [pure & long lasting], and in the stone a new name written [names in Scripture often stand for a person’s character.e.g. In Gen 32:28 Jacob prevailed and was renamed Israel which means “for as a prince hast thou power with God.”

John here applies to the church the promise of a new name given to Jerusalem (See Isa 62:2; 65:15). John sees the Christian church as those upon whom the promises to Israel are to be fulfilled], which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].

PERGAMOS AS PROPHECY

The Church gaining political power 313-538 AD.

When Constantine ended the persecutions begun by Diocletian he brought a greater danger to the church. While she maintained purity in the grim face of death and suffering, she would yield to evil when lulled to sleep by the smiling face of popularity. The Pergamum period of history runs from about the time of Constantine's espousal of the Christian cause until the full establishment of the papal power. A.D. 313 - A.D. 538. It was a period which saw the amalgamation of the church with the state.

During the pergamum period of history the Church of Rome won the religious, and to some extent the political leadership of Western Europe and Satan established his seat within the church.

Through the Smyrna period Satan learned that persecution would not crush out the church so Satan tried the plan of Balaam, to lure the church this time with riches and political power.

The corrupt church bishops (represented by the prophet Balaam) & the Pagan Roman emperor Constantine (represented by king Balac) united to further each other's power. This was the falling away from pure Christianity and the visible formation of the man of sin within the church prophesied in 2 Thess 2:2-8. "...corruption rapidly progressed...This compromise between paganism and Christianity resulted in the development of 'the man of sin'..." GC 49-50. The workings of the man of sin come into focus in the next church period.

Where Satan's seat refers to the power of Satan during this period of history, it was as though he reigned over all that happened.

As Balaam was rebuked by the ass he rode (2 Pet 2:15-16), so the false church was rebuked by some of her faithful people represented by "Antipas" (Rev 2:13), but like Balaam the church still did evil. At this time the spirit of authoritarianism arose.

Constantine passed the first Sunday law in 321. Enc' Britannica, Vol 11, 1989, art. Sunday, p392.

"...thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

Though the Roman church has done much bad it has also upheld some truth. During the Pergamos period various heresies appeared. In dealing with the nature of Christ several councils were held where various decisions were made:

Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325)

Jesus is truly God.

Concil of Constantinople (A.D. 381)

Jesus is truly man.

Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431)

His Godhood & Manhood were combined in a single Person.

Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)

He possess two distinct natures, Human & Divine.

These truths are still held by most Protestants and Roman Catholics.

THYATIRA

18* ¶ And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira [Probably meaning "contrition."

"Contrite - grieving and penitent for sin or shortcoming." *Websters Collegiate*

Dictionary.

Strong's Greek Dictionary gives the meaning as "odour of affliction."

Thyatira was a source of purple dyed cloth. (Acts 16:11-15) write; These things saith the Son of God [this is the only use of this title in Revelation. It shows Christ's divinity and is appropriate in that during his period the position and prerogatives of Christ were usurped by antichrist, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God [the church], showing himself that he is God." 2Thess 2:4.

The "Son of God" was replaced by "the son of perdition." The "Man of sorrows," replaced by the "Man of Sin.], who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire [searches & tries character v 23], and his feet [are] like fine brass [See note on Rev 1:15 where this indicated that Christ was connected with His people on earth];

19* I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [to be] more than the first [The church had more spiritual growth at the end than the beginning].

20* Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel [A corrupter of the truth and a supporter of error, an idolater, and persecutor of God's people, whom Ahab, king of Israel, married and was corrupted by. (See 1 Kings 18-21). Jezebel probably represents a class of people here], which calleth herself a prophetess [claims to reveal things hidden to others & claims to explain oracles], to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols [lured God's people into pagan practices].

21* And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22* Behold, I will [Christ speaks of the future] cast her into a bed [This denotes illness (Job 33:19)], and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation [them which commit adultery with her in the future. The plagues of Rev 16], except they repent of their deeds.

23* And I will kill her children [Evidently this mother's children are also corrupt. cf 1 Kings 10:1, 7] with death [the Septuagint reads "with plagues." "With pestilence." RSV]; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins [motives] and hearts [All churches will, after they have been resurrected, see the judgments of God]; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works ["...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Rom 14:10. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things [done] in [his] body, according to that he hath done, whether [it be] good or bad" 2Cor 5:10].

24* But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine [have not followed Jezebel's teachings], and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden [faithfulness to the light that was theirs was and is sufficient. All God requires is that we do the good we know. We are judged only on the truth we know or could have known.

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James

4:17].

25* But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come [This does not necessarily indicate that those of Thyatira would live till the Second Coming.

“Till I come” may mean, hold the truth’s you have “till I come” and give you more].

26* And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end [one must remain in the faith], to him will I give power over the nations [Like the Laodiceans (Rev 3:21) instead of being judged by apostates the saints will reign as judges over the nations. cf. Rev 20:4

“Ask of me, and I shall give [thee] the heathen [for] thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth [for] thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” Ps 2:8-9]:

27* And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers [Those judged evil will be destroyed. Rev 20:15]: even as I received of my Father.

28* And I will give him the morning star [Jesus gives Himself to us. Rev 22:16].

29* He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

THYATIRA AS PROPHECY

The Church under papal Roman dominion. A.D. 538-1517 when Martin Luther began the Reformation or 1563 (the close of the Council of Trent).

Thyatira covers the period of papal supremacy, i.e. the Dark Ages and later Middle Ages.

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [to be] more than the first.”

Though guilty of much evil the Roman Church did have those who were genuine christians. Even Martin Luther, who in his latter years is not known for complimenting Roman Catholicism spoke of her “splendidly built” hospitals in Italy, with their “very diligent” attendants, “very clean” beds, and “learned” physicians. Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, 55 vols. 54:296.

However with the Scriptures scarce, truths were lost & pagan practices crept into the church. Christ’s ministry in heaven was obscured by a corrupted priesthood on earth who made a business out of church. Many were deceived into thinking salvation could be earned by works or bought off the church.

In 533 Emperor Justinian made the bishop of Rome (Pope) “the corrector of heretic,” and made him “head over all the holy churches.” *Code of Justinian*, sec 1.

At this time many of those true to the faith were in the wilderness.

v 19 The end of the Thyatira period, saw the beginnings of the Reformation, and many truths were restored making the end of the period better than the beginning

v 20 Jezebel (See 1 Kings 18-21) married Ahab, king of Israel. whom she influenced into Baal sun worship along with most of Israel. The prophet Elijah called Israel to repentance

and a devastating drought of 3 1/2 years struck. Jezebel slew God's prophets while strengthening the grip of Baal upon the people. Finally at Mt. Carmel Baal worship was publically exposed and eventually Jezebel and Ahab's family was destroyed.

Jezebel here represents the papacy which led Christians into spiritual fornication, false doctrine, and persecuted & martyred those who refused. See table following.

A woman may symbolize a church, a pure woman a pure church a corrupt woman a corrupt church cf. Rev 12:1.

Papal dominion lasted 3 1/2 prophetic times (i.e. 3 1/2 prophetic years which represents 1260 literal years).

This was prefigured by the 3 1/2 year famine in the experience of Elijah and Jezebel (Luke 4:25; 1 Kings 17-18).

v 21 God gave the papacy opportunity to repent. The Thyatira period is the longest of all church periods spanning over 1000 years.

Instead of the Papacy accepting the advancing light the Pope called Luther "a wild boar" in 1520 and excommunicated him in 1521. Rome dug her heels in and at the Council of Trent after many vigorous debates she codified her theology into an official system for the first time. Unfortunately the traditional views instead of the Biblical views won out. The Council of Trent is an appropriate place to end the Thyatira period.

Williston Walker, whose textbook has been widely used in colleges and seminaries for nearly a century, says about this time (1560s) that a new spirit stirred those parts of Europe that continued to be Catholic. It was a spirit of

(1) Intense opposition to Protestantism

(2) Mediaeval in its theology

(3) Ready to fight or to suffer for its faith.

Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, rev. ed. 1959, p379.

v 22-23 "Behold, I will cast her into a bed [This denotes illness (Job 33:19)], and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children."

This may be applied to the past and the future.

As applied to the past we might think of the Black Death (bubonic Plague) which swept through Europe killing two-fifths of the population. That period also saw The Hundred Years War between England & France and urban revolts by the poor which rent the fabric of society. Along with the Plague which lingered 300 years, hostilities cumulated between Catholics in the south & Lutherans in the north and the populace staggered into the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

At the end of the horrendous conflict the survivor found that Europe had been torn apart by countless armies and lawless brigands. Bands of wild orphans roamed about among countless women had been ravished and industry and agriculture were paralyzed.

Estimates of the casualties have been as high as 10,000,000 deaths out of an initial population of 18,000,000 in Germany alone. Walker, *History*, p396.

If the Catholic South had accepted the principles of the Reformation and if the Protestant north had remembered them the Thirty Years War would never have occurred and what a difference it would have made!

As applied to the future it refers to the church which has fornicated with the kings of the earth being cast into a sick bed as God's judgments fall. The state powers that formed an alliance with her and the children of papal Rome (Rev 17:5), i.e. the corrupted Protestant churches which have adopted papal characteristics & practices will also suffer the plagues of Rev 16 if they do not repent.

Just as Thyatira produced purple cloth (See on v 1), so purple is worn by the corrupt church, the "mother of harlots." Rev 17:4.

v 24 "...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" refers to the faithful Reformers probably including people like Jan Milic of Prague; John Wicliffe and his followers, the Lollards; and John Huss and the Hussites; the Waldenses

"...I will put upon you none other burden."

The faithful Reformers were given the burden of rebuking the corrupt church with its associated risk of persecution. Many lost their lives giving the messages for their time; primarily that salvation is by faith, not works and that doctrine is to be according to the Bible and the Bible alone. Others would receive further burdens later.

THE LAST THREE CHURCHES AS PROPHECY

Many groups of seven occur in Revelation:

7 Churches, 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, 7 Plagues, 7 Heads, etc. Sevens in Revelation come in two parts. A first group of 4 followed by a second group of 3:

(a) The first 4 seals are symbolic horses. In the last 3 seals the horse symbol is dropped.

(b) The first 4 trumpets are called trumpets The last 3 trumpets are called woes.

(c) The first 4 plagues are not universal [GC p628]. The last 3 plagues are universal.

This suggests that the first four churches form a set and the last three are a set.