

“There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing”
(2 Tim 4:8).

SEVEN CHURCHES

I. INSIGHTS CONCERNING THE SEVEN CHURCHES

A. MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES COMPEL BELIEVERS.

1. They reveal the Son of the Most High in His glorified position as Son of Man with all power and authority.
2. They are last the Words our Savior Messiah spoke.
3. They are specifically and urgently addressed to His Church (Body).
4. Each of the seven messages carries the weight of unusual solemnity and importance.
5. In them, we see the Savior walking among His Church as Judge in the solemn act of inspection and decision.
6. Each of the seven letters is written as a personal message sealed and stamped to each believer.
7. **Seven times He entreats and commands believers to hear His seven messages.**
8. They are vital to those who seek to be ready and prepare others for His appearing.
9. The Savior speaks a special blessing upon the attentive reader and hearer of Revelation.
10. His solemn admonitions command our attention.

B. MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES ARE PERSONAL AND PROPHETIC.

1. In his book, *Revelation*, Dr. Charles Ryrie states, “These (seven) churches were representative of all churches at that time, as well as those of subsequent generations. Just as the letters to the Corinthians, though written to the church at Corinth, concerns the church everywhere and at all times (1 Cor 1:2), so these letters are for the church past , present, and future.” Therefore to this present day they are personal to each believer as well as to each congregation.
2. H.A. Ironsides shares, “Seven in Scripture is the number of perfection (completeness); and you have only to read these seven letters and then take any good, reliable record of church history and see for yourself how perfectly the key fits the lock.”
3. Most scholars recognize a balance between the **personal application** of the messages of the seven churches and the **prophetic overview they cast** of the entire Church Age. Which is according to the very nature of the Almighty One (Isa. 42:9; Jn 16:13).

C. MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES REVEAL ETERNAL REWARDS.

1. The Salutation addressed to the angel of the Church was chosen especially for each church and reveals specifics about Messiah’s power & glory (chapter 1).
2. **Each Reward** is uniquely suited and promised to the overcomers in each of the Seven Churches.
3. In the **first three epistles**, the **admonition appears before the reward**; in the **last four** it comes after the reward and concludes the epistle.
4. The **last four epistles** contain admonitions concerning the imminent return of Christ Messiah.

5. In *The Revelation Record* Dr. Henry Morris illuminates an amazing phenomena, “All seven of the promises to the overcomers involve features that are mentioned again in the description of the ages to come.” In other words, Dr. Morris points out that rewards for the overcomers who reign with the Messiah in the millennium will follow them in the Age to Come.

AMAZING REWARDS FOR OVERCOMERS

OVERCOMER	MESSIAH’S MILLENNIAL REIGN	AGE TO COME
Ephesus - Revelation 2:7	Tree of Life	Revelation 22:2
Smyrna - Revelation 2:11	Crown of Life	Revelation 20:6
Pergamum - Revelation 2:17	New Name	Revelation 22:4
Thyatira - Revelation 2:28	Morning Star	Revelation 22:16
Sardis - Revelation 3:5	White Raiment	Revelation 19:8
Philadelphia - Revelation 3:12	The New Jerusalem	Revelation 22:2
Laodicea - Revelation 3:21	Sharing His Throne	Revelation 20:4

II. MESSIAH’S MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

A. LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS - REVELATION 2:1-7

B. LETTER TO THE CHURCH SMYRNA 2:8 -11

1. The Church at Smyrna:

It is Izmir today, about thirty-five miles north of Ephesus. It was and continues to be an important seaport city known for its trade in wines. It was a beautiful city with many temples, including one erected to the Emperor Tiberias. Smyrna can be translated “myrrh” meaning “bitter” (Matt 2:11; Mk 15:23; Jn 19:39). Smyrna is the persecution age, the second of seven periods of church history.

2. Salutation to the Angel:

To the Church at Smyrna Messiah presents Himself as the One who died and is alive, assuring them of resurrection. This was most fitting for the saints at Smyrna who were experiencing martyrdom.

3. Commendation:

Saints at Smyrna are commended; though they are poor they are rich spiritually. As Satan brings great persecution against them, they are encouraged to be faithful unto death; Polycarp was martyred in 155 A.D.

4. Admonition:

In the place of correction, they are admonished not to fear but to embrace a promise of a crown of life for their faithfulness. Prophetically they are told Satan will cast some into prison, and persecution for “ten days” and some will be killed; which was fulfilled by Nero and Domitian. Smyrna did not repent for *leaving their first love* (abandoning Abraham their Father, his descendants, their Hebraic parentage).

5. Reward:

The overcomer will receive a crown of life and escape the second death, the lake of fire (Rev 20:14; 21:8).

1. The Church at Pergamum

The city was about sixty miles north of Smyrna.

The name divides into two parts: “elevation and marriage.”

For several centuries it was an independent kingdom, but in 133 B.C. it became part of the Roman Empire. It was a great religious center, with the location of the only temple of the imperial cult in Asia built in honor of Augustus Caesar (who was reigning at the time Jesus Messiah was born). Greek pagan mysteries flourished there also. The great altar of Zeus was located there—the largest altar in the world.

Pergamum was an intellectual center having one of the finest libraries of antiquity. It was at Pergamum that skins were first used to replace papyrus which disintegrates over a relatively short period of time.

A medical center was located there. The coiled snake on a pole, the deity of medicine, Aesculapius (we get word “scalpel”) was commonly worshiped.

Pergamum characterizes the period in church history when Christianity was elevated to power and married to the political hierarchy through a worldly alliance.

2. Salutation to the Angel:

To the Church at Pergamum Christ the Messiah presents Himself as the One with **the two-edged sword, the symbol of the power of His Word** and the **assurance of judgment on the basis of absolute truth.**

3. Commendation:

Pergamum is commended for her steadfastness while in the very center of Satan’s domination. Antipas (either a member of the assembly or one brought to Pergamum for trial) had already suffered martyrdom. Dr. Charles Feinberg writes, “**Satan’s throne speaks of his usurped world power.** Scripture identifies him as the prince of this world (Mt. 4:8, 9; II Cor 4:4).

In the Smyrna age Satan tried to destroy the church by persecution. In the next centuries he ruined her testimony by patronage... of false principles within.” Constantine brought many into the church who were totally pagan at heart.

4. Correction:

Edward Gibbon, in his famous work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, stated: “The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that in one year 12,000 men were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment with twenty pieces of gold had been promised by the emperor to every convert. In many cases heathen were won over by adoption of pagan rites and festivals as part of Christian worship. The union of church and state has wrought havoc wherever introduced, as attested in ancient times and to this day” **Pergamum is the power-controlled church.**

Dr. Henry Morris points out, “The Pergamites had not kept out the false teachers, as had the churches at Ephesus and Smyrna. Even though they had not yet embraced their teachings, they had allowed them in the church, and the leaven was beginning to work.”

Dr. Charles Ryrie expresses, the condemnation was in the realm of morals, the (doctrine of Balaam) and the (doctrine of Nicolaitans). Balaam (Num 22:1-24;25), finding himself unable to curse God’s people, instructed Balak king of Moab to corrupt them through **immorality** and **idolatry** so that God eventually judged them. His doctrine is the teaching of compromise.

Balaam was a prophet for gain; an anti-Semite, his motives were to curse Israel. The Nicolaitans, as referenced earlier, is clericalism which developed rapidly through the teaching of the early Gentile leadership. Dr Feinberg underscores, “There is no basis in Scripture now for a special class of priests, such as God instituted in Israel (cf. Lev 8).

The ultimate claim of Nicolaitanism is infallibility.”

5. Admonition:

Christ the Messiah calls the church at Pergamum to repent for allowing the Balaamites and Nicolaitans in their assembly. Dr. Morris hits the target, ““Their minds must be changed (which is the meaning of ‘repent’) from an attitude of compromise to one of insistence on doctrinal and moral purity. Otherwise they would face the fearful prospect of judgment by the same verbal sword which will one day smite the nations”” (Rev 19:15).

6. Reward:

In the wilderness each morning the LORD fed the Israelites with natural literal manna. The overcomer at Pergamum is promised to eat of the hidden manna, Christ the Messiah (Jn 6). By abiding in Him, the Spirit reveals our Father’s ways, His hidden secrets.

The **white stone** refers to an Hebraic custom: the judges determined a verdict by placing a black and white stone in a urn, if the white stone came out, it meant acquittal; thus the white stone would mean the assurance that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ the Messiah (Roms 8:1).

III. MESSIAH’S WORD TO HIS CHURCH (REVELATION 2:1 - 3:22)

CHURCH	SALUTATION TO THE ANGEL	COMMENDATION	CORRECTION	ADMONITION	REWARD
EPHESUS 2:1-7 The Zealous Church, Apostolic Age, 30-100 A.D.	MESSIAH REVEALED: • Holding seven stars • Walking among the Churches	• Their Works • Endurance • Discernment • Hatred of Nicolaitans	• Left their/His First Love	• Remember • Repent • Repeat first works	THE OVERCOMER: • Will Eat of the Eternal Tree of Life
SMYRNA 2:8-11 The Suffering Church, Age of Persecution 100 - 300 A.D.	MESSIAH REVEALED: • The First & the Last • Firstfruits from the Dead	For Enduring: • Tribulation • Poverty • Martyrdom	• No Correction • (However Smyrna failed to repent for leaving their/ His First Love.)	• Do Not Fear • Be Faithful	THE OVERCOMER: • Receives a Crown of Life • Escape the second death
PERGAMUM 2:12-17 Power Controlled Church, Imperial Church Age 313 - 606 A.D.	MESSIAH REVEALED: • His Words are a sharp two-edged sword.	• Steadfastness for Messiah’s Name & • Faith	• Idolatry • Immorality • Paganism • anti-Semitism	• Repent or Messiah will fight against them with the sword of His Mouth	THE OVERCOMER: • Eat of the hidden manna & • Receive a white stone, a new name.

IV. THE SEVEN CHURCHES HISTORICALLY PARALLEL THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AGE

LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT	ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY	PERIOD IN CHURCH HISTORY
• EPHESUS (2:1-7) REPRESENTS LEADERSHIP: JEWISH TO APPROX. 65 A.D.; GENTILE, EARLY CHURCH FATHERS	APOSTOLIC AGE THE ZEALOUS CHURCH	30 - 100 A.D.
• SMYRNA (2:8-11) REPRESENTS LEADERSHIP: GENTILE, EARLY CHURCH FATHERS	PERSECUTION AGE THE SUFFERING CHURCH	100 - 313 A.D.
• PERGAMUM (2:12-17) REPRESENTS LEADERSHIP: GENTILE, CONSTANTINIAN ERA	IMPERIAL AGE THE POWER-CONTROLLED CHURCH	313 - 606 A.D.