

REVELATION CHAPTERS 2 & 3

Letters to the Seven Churches

Revelation 1:19 - "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."

- 3 Applications
- 1) Literal - Applies to the existing churches of the day
 - 2) Universal (or Personal) - Applicable to all churches throughout time (or to the individual)
 - 3) Prophetic - The letters represent the evolution of the church through time (see Church History below)

Church Name	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum / Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
Historic Background	The coastal city (founded 900s BC) was famous for the Temple of Artemis (completed around 550 BC), which has been designated one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Its many monumental buildings included the Library of Celsus and a theatre capable of holding 24,000 spectators. When Augustus became emperor in 27 BC, he made Ephesus the capital of proconsular Asia (which covered western Asia Minor) instead of Pergamum. Ephesus then entered an era of prosperity, becoming both the seat of the governor and a major center of commerce. It was second in importance and size only to Rome.	Present day Izmir, Turkey. Two sites of the ancient city are today within Izmir's boundaries. The first, probably founded by indigenous peoples, founded 11th century BC, rose to prominence during the Archaic Period as one of the principal ancient Greek settlements in western Asia Minor. The second, whose foundation is associated with Alexander the Great, reached metropolitan proportions during the period of the Roman Empire. Most of the ancient city's present-day remains date to the Roman era, the majority from after the 178 AD earthquake.	Asclepius (Greco-Roman god of healing), Num 21:8-9; medical school performed healings, gave white stone to those healed, they wrote what they were cured from on the white stone (ref 2:17).	Thyatira was an ancient Greek city called Pelopia and Semiramis before it was renamed to Thyatira in 290 BC by King Seleucus I Nicator. He learned that his wife had given birth to a daughter,so he called the city "Thuateira" from Greek meaning "daughter", although it is likely that it is an older, Lydian name. During the 1st century AD, it was famous for its dyeing facilities and was a center of the purple cloth trade. Inscriptions have been found relating to the guild of dyers in the city. Indeed, more guilds suntechuia (syndicate) are known in Thyatira than elsewhere (inscriptions mention the following: wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths).	Sardis (settled 1500 BC on a 1,500' tel) was controlled by Croesus of Lydia (585 BC) and conquered by Cyrus of Persia (547 BC), Alexander the Great (334 BC) and Antiochus III (214 BC). It suffered a devastating earthquake (AD 17 Lydia earthquake). The city was known for failure.	It was established in 189 BC by King Eumenes II of Pergamon. He named the city for the love of his brother, who would be his successor, Attalus II (159–138 BC), whose loyalty earned him the nickname, "Philadelphos", literally meaning "one who loves his brother". It had vineyards and was devoted to Dionysis, the god of wine. Philadelphia was well known for its vulnerability to earthquakes. It suffered a devastating earthquake (AD 17 Lydia earthquake).Today it is named Alashira ("City of God" in Arabic).	Oldest of the 7 churches, from 2000 BC, likely on the trade route linked to the east. Major industries (making it a tremendously wealthy city): shiny black wool, banking and a medical school famous for eye salve. City was destroyed by a devastating earthquake in AD 60-62. The Roman empire typically rebuilt cities but egotistical Laodicea refused help and rebuilt themselves. It was named Laodicea in 246 BC by Antiochus II Theos for his wife Laodice. Etymology of Laodicea (<i>la</i> o = people, <i>dikos</i> = justice). Laodiceans felt so good about themselves that they didn't need help from anyone. Aquaducts supplied hot water from Heiropolis and cold water from Colossae. Both waters arrived lukewarm - a warning to always be in season.
Revelation of Christ	2:1 - "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands."	2:8 - "These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again."	2:12 - "These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword." The sword is the word of God (Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12).	2:18 - "These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze." That is, 'Son of God' is His credential for authority; eyes that see right through you; the altar of burnt sacrifice was of bronze because the metal could withstand the heat.	3:1a - "These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars." The seven spirits could refer to Isa 11:2, the seven stars refer to Rev 1:20.	3:7 - "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens." This is the only introduction not referencing chapter 1. "Holy" = equality with God, "true" = real or genuine. <i>cf</i> Isa 22:22 for 'key to the house of David', perhaps the key to life; Rev 1:18 speaks of the 'keys of death and Hades'.	3:14 - "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." Amen = emphatic 'Yes!' Faithful and true witness = He is the deity (Rev 1:5). Ruler (or Beginning in other versions) = source (compare Gen 1:3 and John 1:1-3).
The Good/ Commendation	2:2-3 - hard working, test the message of evil men, enduring, not grown weary; 2:6 - hate the work of the Nicolaitins	2:9 - "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!" Contrast Mt 5:10-11 with Mt 3:17. <i>cf</i> Rom 2:28-29, Mt 10:28. "10 days" could mean "temporary" or the 10 emperors, Nero to Diocletian, who severely persecuted Christians	2:13 - "Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives."	2:19 - "I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first."	3:4 - "Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy." No commendation for the church as a whole, but only a few.	3:8-9 - "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you." v8 the 'open door' could mean eternal life or the opportunity to evangelize. v9 could mean the church would even evangelize the Judiazers.	No good or commendation given.
The Bad/Rebuke	2:4 - abandoned your first love, doing works without love (I Cor 13:1-3)	No rebuke	2:14-15 - "There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans." Balaam (Num 25:1-3, 31:15-16; 2Pet 2:14-15; Jud 11)	2:20-21 - "Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling."	3:1b-3a - "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent."	No rebuke	3:15-17 - "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." vv15-16 the apostate church (<i>cf</i> Mt 24:10, 1 Tim 4:1, 2 Tim 3:1-5 and 4:3-4, Rom 1:25, 2 Thes 2:1-3 and 4:13-18). v17 Compare this with Smyrna's commendation and their industry of banking, salve and black wool.
Exhortation/ Warning	2:5 - "Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."	2:10 - "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown." The "crown" could be eternal life or avoiding the second death. <i>cf</i> Jam 1:12	2:16 - Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." <i>cf</i> Isa 11:4	2:22-25 - "So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, 'I will not impose any other burden on you, except to hold on to what you have until I come.'"	3:3 - "Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you." <i>cf</i> Ps 51:10-12, Rev 16:15, Mt 22:11-13	3:9 - "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you." v9 could mean the church will even evangelize the Judiazers.	3:18-19 - "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent." Poem at Lübeck Cathedral, Germany: "Ye call Me Master and obey me not, Ye call Me Light and see Me not, Ye call Me Way and walk not, Ye call Me Life and desire Me not, Ye call Me wise and follow Me not, Ye call Me fair and love Me not, Ye call Me rich and ask Me not, Ye call Me eternal and seek Me not, Ye call Me gracious and trust Me not, Ye call Me noble and serve Me not, Ye call Me mighty and honour Me not, Ye call Me just and fear Me not, If I condemn you, blame me not." (Anonymous)
Promise/Reward	2:7 - "To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."	2:11 - "The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death." <i>cf</i> Rev 20:14, 21:8	2:17 - "To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it." How to overcome or overcome what? 1Jn 5:4-5	2:26-28 - "To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'—just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give that one the morning star."	3:5 - "The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels."	3:10-12 - "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name." Does 'the hour of trial' refer to the tribulation (<i>cf</i> Jer 30:7, Mt 24:21, Rev 6-19)? Does v10 refer to pre-tribulation rapture (<i>cf</i> Isa 26:19-21, Zeph 2:3, Ps 27:5)? v10 <i>ek</i> = from, a separation (this has raised the view of the prophetic application of the church letters). v11 <i>stephanos</i> = crown (of life), a reward.	3:20-21 - "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne."
Command to Hear	"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."						

Prophetic Application	Church Through the Ages						
	Pentacost, A.D. 33	→					Rapture
Character of the Church	Apostolic Period Ephesus = "desired"	Persecuted Church Smyrna = "myrrh", a spice used for embalming	Constantine - promoted Christianity, became the State Religion by Theodosius in A.D. 380 Pergamos = "married"	Roman empire fell, Roman Catholic Church emerged Thyatira = 'sacrifice' or perhaps 'daughter' named by Seleucus in 300 B.C.	Protestant Reformation (Martin Luther-95 Theses, John Calvin, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Huldrych Zwingli) Sardis = 'escaping'	The Great Awakening (evangelical church, missionaries) Philadephia = 'brotherly love'	Apostate Church Laodicea = 'people ruling' apostisia = falling away, defection mid-1800s, humanism and Charles Darwin's "Origin of the Species" 20th century, Industrial Revolution and labor (adult and child labor) abuses A.D. 1900-pres
Time Period	A.D. 33-100	A.D. 100-312	A.D. 312-600	A.D. 600-1517	A.D. 1517-1730	A.D. 1730-1900	
Motivation	Held strongly to pure theology, became legalistic?	Roman Empire	Forced religion, became idolatrous, religion married to the State	Introduced many heresies and defilements	Rebellion against heretical theology	On fire for the Lord	Liberal and compromised theologies