

Chapter 2

Up until the 1800's, Revelation was interpreted to have the 7 churches stand for 7 church ages. There are dozens of scholars from the 1400s to the mid 1800s who wrote about the chronological fulfillment of these churches as segments of time in the prophecy. Some of the ones I gravitate to are Benson, Barnes, Matthew Henry, and Mede. You can find the first 3 on biblehub commentary, and Joseph Mede in the library section of biblehub. We will continue on that path and see how God fulfilled 2000 years of prophecy through a consecutive advance through the churches he listed. Go online and watch videos of each church, there is so much history with them and it further connects scripture to history!

Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

1) Read Isaiah 41:10. How does this relate to the relationship Jesus had with his disciples who started the seven churches?

2) Read about the testing of the church in Acts 20:28-31

2) See 1 Timothy 1:18-20 where Paul warns Timothy about those in the church that rejected truth.

3) Look up the "parallel" versions of Revelation 2:3 on biblehub. See how many of them have "persecution" and "suffering?" Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 in light of persecution and suffering.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire (95 AD to 250 AD)

"HISTORICAL CONNECTION" is a place where you can google and research the historical events that coincide with the prophecy. If you are in a group setting, someone can offer a summary or a short video to supplement the teaching, or to take a deep dive into the issue if you have time.

4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned (forsaken/released/sent away) the love you had at first (your first love). 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

4) Which denomination were the first church leaders - the disciples who planted the 7 churches?

4) What was the event in 313 AD that changed how followers of Jesus worshipped?

5) Jesus says that the church has fallen. Did Jesus look favorably on this change in worship?

5) See Daniel 7:24-25. What did the little horn do about the times and seasons?

5) Was this change met with approval from God?

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Read about the Council of Nicaea where the emperor of Rome decided how Christians were to worship, and the Council of Laodicea where Rome put more restrictions on Sabbath worship.

6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: First Seven Ecumenical Councils

The Councils, starting with Ephesus, put the Roman Church on a path of pagan holidays and instituted a hierarchy of popes and bishops instead of modeling the first century church of believers gathering together of one accord. There were Christians who hated the views of the popes and bishops, and the Arian Controversy arose. The Arian Christians opposed the trinitarian viewpoint of the popes and bishops. The Roman Church did not repent and therefore, followed a path of darkness and brutality going into the Dark Ages.

7) See Proverbs 3:18, 11:30 and 15:4 about the tree of life.

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. 9 "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto 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. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

Smyrna was where they manufactured myrrh. When the myrrh fruit was crushed, it releases an aroma and was also used to anoint the priests. It was used in embalming as well. The Roman Empire as depicted in Daniel 7 as the dreadful beast died in 476 AD and was revived as the Holy Roman Empire in 800 AD. The Word of God was preserved through this age by monks in monasteries throughout Europe. They lived quiet, simple lives, giving themselves over to vows of poverty and chastity. The Holy Roman Empire would be a very powerful adversary for 1000 years - 10 prophetic days, from 800 to 1806.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Aidan of Lindisfarne

10) Read James 1:12

10) See Revelation 11 and 12 for the tribulation the believers endured from the synagogue of Satan.

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. 13 I know where you live, where the throne of Satan sits. Yet you have held fast to My name and have not denied your faith in Me, even in the day when My faithful witness Antipas was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

Antipas was killed in Geneva, Switzerland. This is located in the revived Roman Empire - the Holy Roman Empire. In the city of Pergamum, there was a throne to Satan, it was the altar of Zeus. This very altar was relocated to Berlin, Germany, in 1878. Berlin was also a city located in the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire started with the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III in 800 AD.

14) The story of Balaam starts in Numbers 22.

14) What does Peter call the false prophets like Balaam in 2 Peter 2:15-17?

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Charlemagne and the divine right of kings

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: How did Charlemagne convert Saxons to Christianity

14) Read Luke 22:19, is the food that was eaten literally changed into the body and blood of Jesus?

14) Look up the Roman church practice of transubstantiation.

14) Read Hosea 4:12 concerning idol worship and harlotry.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION: Idols in the Catholic Church... Statue of St Peter - Jupiter...The Catholic Church removed one of the commandments

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

17) Jesus is the hidden manna, see John 6:48-51.

17) See Benson's definition on the white stone: "The ancients on many occasions, gave their votes in judgment by small stones, black = condemn, white = acquitted, sometimes wrote on small smooth stones,"

17) See Isaiah 62:2 and 65:15 to show how God gave the redeemed a new name.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

In Chapter 11, we learn about the faithful believers who walked with feet of bronze, and the light of truth burned brightly. The Waldensians were much more tolerant of the papacy, therefore endured less brutality and some actually survived their persecution. They tolerated Jezebel. Their latter works would lead to a revolution away from the papacy and to put bibles in the hands of ordinary believers.

21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.

The warnings of the two previous churches were not heeded, now Jesus will come to judge. Chapter 11 deals with the pestilence, plague and suffering of those who kept to the practices of the Roman church. Interestingly, those who had Jewish customs of Kosher did not suffer severely from the bubonic plague.

St. Anthony's fire (getting a fungus from moldy grain) in the 1100s = 20-40k deaths

The great famine, 1315 - 1322, killing 10-25% of the population

And the black death - bubonic plague, 1346 to 1353, killed from 75 - 200 million

23) The children are people who walk in their ways, see Ezekiel 16:44-52.

24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. 25 Only hold fast what you have until I come.