

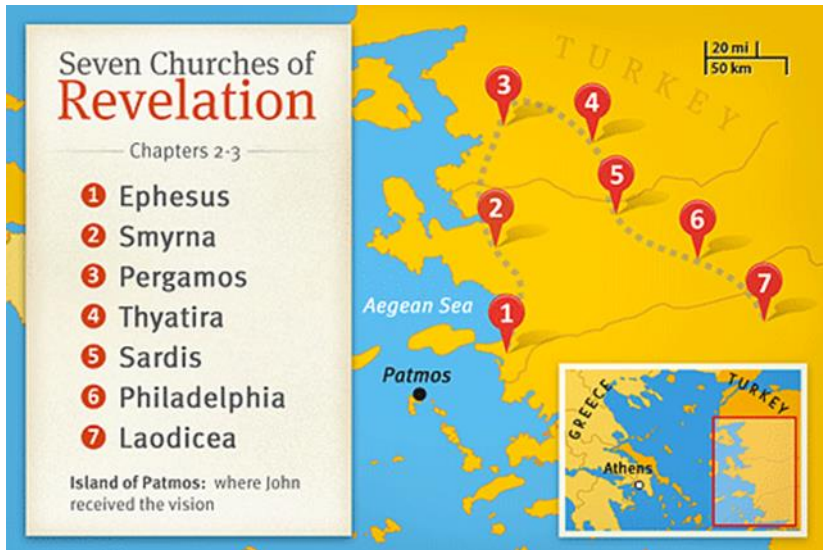


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Seven Churches Conclusion

Revelation chapters 2 and 3



Five of the seven speak of sin in the church and warn the church.

By virtue of the order that they are in, in chapter 2 and 3, they provide for us a chronological departure or a chronological

progression into devastation and destruction in which the church becomes Satan's.

The church goes from being the Lord's to being Satan's in this five-step progression.

1. Losing their first love

To the church at Ephesus our Lord says,

Revelation 2:2, *"I know your works, your labour, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;*

- Ability to endure
- Steadfast
- Courageous in the midst of hardship,
- Spiritual discernment of identifying the false apostles, and
- Patience.

Paul had put Timothy in Ephesus to set things right.

The two main objectives were:

1. to deal with false doctrine and
2. ungodliness.

So that the church can be brought back with a commitment to true doctrine and godliness.

Timothy must have been very successful. By God's grace, he was able to purge out the false pastors, the false leaders, the false teachers. He was able to turn the people around from error to truth.

He was able to bring about true godliness in that church, by God's grace, through his ministry. When this letter is written in the revelation, the 30 years that have passed have seen the church in Ephesus go from being led by false leaders, pastors and false teachers, to true spiritual leaders, pastors and Apostles. From the influences of ungodly men to ungodly living.

Ephesus church blessed with the

- pastorate of Paul,
- ministry of Aquila,
- preaching of Apollos,
- leadership and ministry of Timothy.

Though this church was in a very pagan city, dominated by the worship of Diana of the Ephesians. One of the seven wonders of the world was her temple filled with eunuchs and priestesses and orgy and drunkenness.

This is a strong, fundamental, orthodox church.

Revelation 2:4, *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

What is first love?

It's the love of

- Passion,
- Enthusiasm,
- Emotion,
- Zeal,
- Thanksgiving,
- Praise,
- Adoration.

The love that pours out of a heart that's just experienced an eternal transformation.

Ephesians they were doing the right things because they were in the habit of doing the right things.

They were even doing them for the right reason.

They wanted to honour the Lord.

They even had a right motive.

But they had left their first love.

- The enthusiasm was gone,
- The thrill was gone,
- The joy was gone.

The honeymoon was over, and they had settled into a comfortable, traditional, orthodox routine.

Remedy:

Revelation 2:5, *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.*

Reach back and remember those precious, love-filled days when first you embraced Christ.

Spiritual defection comes from spiritual forgetting.

Do you know the reasons why God repeats so many times in the Old Testament?

God continues to recite over and over to His people the history of what He had done for them in order that the fire of gratitude might ever be flamed.

Do you love the Word now as you did then?

Do you have the same hunger to listen to the teaching of the Word of God as you did then?

Or

Have you been hearing it for so long that it's now beginning to have diminishing return?

For me the Word of God continues to me to be exciting and fresh.

How about you?

Do you long to be alone with God in prayer?

Do you rush to worship?

Is being in the church as important to you as it once was?

How about fellowship?

Or

Is it activity now?

Do you enjoy your Sunday service more than Christ?

Do you enjoy being part of fellowship more than Christ?

Do you enjoy your activity, your service more than the Word of God?

If you do, it's probably that first love is gone!

Remember how it was.

“Repent.”

Having lost your first love is a sin.

Confess it.

Confess your lack of love.

Confess your lack of desire for the Word.

Confess the lack of enthusiasm and eagerness.

Confess your lack of zeal for joyful service to Christ.

“Do the first works”

Do what you did the first times of your experience spiritually.

I do believe that well-meaning, well-intentioned, good, faithful, Christian people can grow very cold. That’s step one.

In Ephesus, it wasn’t everybody that had left their first love; it was just some.

2. Compromise

Church at Pergamum.

Revelation 2:13, *“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

Not only Satan’s throne there, but he lives there. They live in Satan’s hometown.

Pergamos, it is said, was the centre of the worship of Caesar in the Roman Empire. Certainly, that would be the throne of Satan, worshiping Caesar as if he were the true God.

Historically that the leading God in the pantheon of that culture was the God Zeus. Zeus had built to his honour the largest, most

renowned altar in the world, and that altar was shaped like a throne and was in Pergamos.

At Pergamos, a very special god, the god of healing, whose name was Asclepius. Asclepius was called the Pergamese god because of his identification with this city. Asclepius was represented in a snake. A medical symbol, you will see a snake wound around it.

So, Caesar worship or the altar of Zeus, or whether you look at the temple of the god Asclepius, the Satan lives and has his throne.

They lost Antipas, have been killed right in the midst of their worship, but they still didn't abandon the truth.

Revelation 2:14, *But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

Two reasons for this warning:

- a) *“you have them in your midst who hold the teaching of Balaam”*

Balaam was a prophet for hire. **Numbers 22 to 25**. He went out and seduced the people of Israel to intermarry with pagans, thus turning them into idolaters.

The intermarriage could have destroyed the messianic line, destroyed the covenant people.

He tried to bring the people of Israel into idolatry, sexual evil, by getting them to compromise with the people around them, to compromise with the world.

He didn't want them to deny their God, but he just wanted them to intermingle with the world.

b) **Revelation 2:15**, *"You also have some that hold that doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."*

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was a teaching that found its way into the church that said Christianity and sinful indulgence are compatible. You can be a Christian and indulge yourself sinfully.

The table of demons and the Table of the Lord are compatible.

Compromise with the world.

Revelation 2:16, *Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.*

The Lord fights His own church then it's in serious trouble.

When you lose your love toward Christ, your love sort of wanders around, and it will attach itself to something in the world.

3. Tolerating Sin

Church at Thyatira

Revelation 2:19, *"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.*

Their love is growing, and works are growing. They are better than they used to be.

Revelation 2:20, *Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.*

A Jezebel type, she had usurped the place of teaching and preaching. Ultimately seduce the people to sexual sin and idolatry.

So, there she was in it, and there were the people.

Here is the progression:

- loss of first love,
- compromise with the world,
- tolerance of sin.

Once you lose your first love then you will compromise with the world, and just wind up tolerating sin because your compromise put you in a position where you couldn't even begin to deal with the issues.

If the church advocates compromise, or settles for a compromise, then how can it begin to discipline people?

Revelation 2:22, *Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.*

I will put you in a bed of judgment, and I will kill all of your followers.

Do you think the Lord wouldn't move in and kill people in His church?

He will.

He did it in Corinth.

He would do it here in Thyatira.

He did it to Ananias and Sapphira.

Revelation 2:24, *“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.*

Jesus is not talking to everybody. He is not going to put any burden on those of you who are true.

- Not everybody in Ephesus had left their first love; some had.
- Not everybody in Pergamos had compromise with the world; some had.
- Not everybody in Thyatira was tolerant of sin, but some were.

it’s the minority that are the problem, not the majority, until you get to the next letter in chapter 3.

4. Deadness

Church at Sardis:

Seven hundred years before this letter, by the way, Sardis was one of the great cities of the world. One of its famous kings was a man named Croesus, whose name became synonymous with wealth.

Revelation 3:1, *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,*

‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

You have got a reputation, but you are dead.

Now look, this is the church content with programs, content with its name.

This is the church that’s nothing but a name, a place, a building, but no life. It’s dead.

Revelation 3:2, *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

This is the dead church, the church over which God writes “Ichabod,”

They are running around got their meetings and their activities going on, but they are dead.

Nothing but form and routine and program.

You love your system more than you love the Scripture.

You love your doctrine more than you love Christ.

Lots of activity, but nothing in terms of spiritual life.

- Loss of first love by a few,
- Compromise with the world by a few more,
- Tolerance of sin by a few,
- The church dies.

Sometimes I have come out of dead church maybe some of you had same experience.

A church where there was no life, where there were activities, but no joy.

No one was coming to Christ.

No one seemed to be growing.

Everything was stagnant and same.

Revelation 3:2-3, *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

The intent is to come with judgment.

Revelation 3:4, *You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.*

Did you notice the transition there?

Now it's not the few that are the problem.

It is the few that are real.

Majority become minority!

Did you get the difference?

"You have a few names."

When a church progress to this level then there are just a few left.

5. False Church

Church at Laodicea.

Revelation 3:14-15, *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*

They are not saved.

They are not committed to Christ.

Revelation 3:16, *So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

One who really is indifferent but professes to be committed to Christ. That is a hypocrite.

- This is the humanistic church.
- This is the False church.
- There is no gospel.
- There is no teaching of the Bible, motivational talk.

They use the bible to say what they want to say.

It's a religious front but there's nothing there.

Satan owns the place.

Progression:

- Loss of first love by a few,
- Compromise with the world by a few more,
- Tolerance of sin by a few,
- The church dies.
- False Church exists.

We left two letters out.

Those two letters were to the church at **Smyrna** and **Philadelphia**.

If there's anything distinct about those two churches.

They endured severe persecution.

Outside persecution tends to purify the church.

It is inside defection in a tolerant society that tends to destroy the church.

It's easy to maintain purity and devotion to Christ because of the persecution. But when there is no persecution how can you maintain the devotion and purity to Christ in this tolerant society?

The church that's persecuted from the outside is often the church that survives and is strong. Both those churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are said to be under attack from the synagogue of Satan.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus Loves His Church

Let us look at what the Lord does for His church.

We are not on our own, the Lord will do His sovereign part.

Revelation 1:5-6, *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The Lord Jesus loves His church.

**How many of you think that God loves our WCF?
Do you love WCF church?**

Sorry to say this: You don't love WCF one fraction of the way the Lord Jesus Christ does.

He loves this church.

My greatest hope for our church in the Love of Christ for His church.

As a Pastor, while I pray for you to be true, faithful, maintain your first love for Him, I am also rejoicing in My heart to know that he loves this church more than I do, more than you do, more than anyone does.

Because He loves His church.

He preserves His church.

2. Jesus Intercedes for His Church

Apostle John hears the voice of the Lord. He turns around, and he sees the image of the Lord in the vision.

Revelation 1:12-13, *Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.*

John sees Jesus among the seven golden lampstands, and He has a garment down to His foot and a golden belt around His waist.

This is most emblematic of the High Priest. Here we see Christ in His priestly work, moving among the churches as He moves among the lampstands, each representing one of the seven churches.

Jesus moves among the churches, trimming the lamp and caring for the church. This reminds us of His intercessory work on our behalf. No matter what the battle, no matter what the struggle, He ever and always intercedes for us, comes to our rescue, before the Father and with His power, in our behalf.

3. Jesus purifies His Church

Revelation 1:14-16, *His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; ¹⁵ His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; ¹⁶ He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*

White as wool for a Hebrew mind, that had reference to wisdom, purity, and holiness.

Jesus can see sin and He can discover anything. When He discovers evil, “His feet are like fine bronze, as if they were fired in a furnace” - and He will trample out judgment on that evil. And His voice comes with authority against evil, like the sound of many waters.

His great power, purifying His church, speaking with authority, judging, cleansing, purging, looking, and finding its sin with His own holy vision. The Lord purifies His church.

There are things in the church of sinful nature that we can't know about, and we can't get to them, and we can't solve them.

Jesus searching eyes can see, and He can bring about judgment and action and discipline and purging in His church whether we ever find out about it or not.

Yes, He purifies His church.

4. Rewards the overcomer

Revelation 1:17-18, *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

John saw the Christ; the Son of God in His glory and he had the same reaction Isaiah did. He just collapsed like a dead man.

Why?

John was afraid.

Why was John afraid?

Because when you see the Lord in holy glory, moving with a sword out of His mouth and speaking like roaring waters and dealing with sin.

The Lord forgives His church.

He has forgiven His church.

“Don’t be afraid; I died for you. I live again for you. I control death and hell”

The implication being you have no fear. He forgives His church.

Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, He rewards His church.

Ephesus:

Revelation 2:7, *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.”*

Smyrna:

Revelation 2:10, *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

Revelation 2:18, “He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.”

Pergamum:

Revelation 2:17, “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”

Thyatira:

Revelation 2:26-28, “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—‘He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.”

Sardis:

Revelation 3:5, “He who overcomes will like them be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:12, “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him 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 him my new name.”

Laodicea:

Revelation 3:21, *“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*