

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

## Chapters 2-3 – Introduction to Church History

### SEVEN TIMELESS LETTERS TO SEVEN AGELESS CHURCHES – REVELATION 2-3

Chapter one ended with God's instruction to the apostle John to \_\_\_\_\_ (Rev. 1:11a, 19). He was to write the things he saw from the past, present and future. *When* he was told to write, he had been moved through time and space by God's Spirit from the Isle called Patmos in 90 AD to the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), a time that still awaits us in 2025. It is from this perspective *in time* that he wrote. When you consider the fact that heaven opens \_\_\_\_\_ times in Revelation (4:1-John goes up; 19:11-Christ comes down with an army), combining that with the instructions given to John to \_\_\_\_\_, we have God's natural book outline:

- 1) Revelation 1-3 - Church history
- 2) Revelation 4-19:10 - Rapture and judgment seat of Christ for believers only  
Tribulation; various events taking place in heaven and on earth
- 3) Revelation 19:11-22 - The second coming, millennium, judgment, new heaven & earth

Today, we begin our study with an \_\_\_\_\_ to chapters 2-3 before entering into the actual texts. These chapters are connected because they contain the seven letters John wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor. But they are much more than that—these two chapters in particular demonstrate the timeless attributes of the Bible itself.

#### The seven letters and churches of Revelation 2-3:

1. The seven letters – Rev. 1:11a, 19
  
2. The seven churches – Rev. 1:11b; 2-3
  - 1) Ephesus – Rev. 2:1-7
  - 2) Smyrna – Rev. 2:8-11
  - 3) Pergamos – Rev. 2:12-17
  - 4) Thyatira – Rev. 2:18-29
  - 5) Sardis – Rev. 3:1-6
  - 6) Philadelphia – Rev. 3:7-13
  - 7) Laodicea – Rev. 3:14-22

#### The scriptural applications of these seven letters:

1. There are 3 basic applications to all scripture
  - Historical, Devotional, and Doctrinal



2. The 3 basic applications to Revelation 2-3

a. Historically – These are seven actual letters \_\_\_\_\_ to seven real angels and seven specific churches that existed historically. They are all located in what was called at the time “Asia,” known now as *Asia Minor* in modern day Turkey. These letters addressed genuine issues concerning the seven churches during 90-96 AD.

b. Devotionally – These seven churches represent churches \_\_\_\_\_; some churches today are just like one or more of these seven churches. At times throughout history churches have been marked by the \_\_\_\_\_ characteristics as these seven churches in Asia Minor.

Also, because of certain elements within the content of each letter, they apply *devotionally* to the saints reading Revelation 1-3 during the tribulation period.

c. Doctrinally – They represent seven periods of time throughout \_\_\_\_\_ as John seeks to fulfill his mission to *write the things that thou hast seen*.

<u>Churches</u>	<u>Time frame</u>	<u>Name means</u>
1) Ephesus – Rev. 2:1-7	- 90 – 175/200 AD	- appealing, desirable; fully purposed
2) Smyrna – Rev. 2:8-11	- 175/200 – 325 AD	- myrrh; bitterness, death
3) Pergamos – Rev. 2:12-17	- 325 – 500 AD	- marriage; much _____
4) Thyatira – Rev. 2:18-29	- 500 – 1000 AD	- continual sacrifice; odor of affliction
5) Sardis – Rev. 3:1-6	- 1000 – 1500 AD	- one that escapes; blood red ones
6) Philadelphia – Rev. 3:7-13	- 1500 – 1900 AD	- brotherly love; _____ one
7) Laodicea – Rev. 3:14-22	- 1900 – Present time	- rights of the people; my rights

\*The start and end dates are approximate as one period transitions into the next

**The reason for seven periods of church history**

1. Seven is a special number throughout scripture

a. Seven is the biblical number of \_\_\_\_\_:

- Six days of creation, seventh day of rest
- Seventh man from Adam was Enoch—type of Church age saints at rapture
- Clean beasts were taken into Noah’s Ark by sevens
- Six days in the Jewish workweek, the seventh day was a day of rest
- Seven spirits of God

- Seven feasts of Israel
- Seven NT Mysteries given to the church
- Seven NT Mysteries given to Israel
- Seven deacons chosen in Acts 6
- Seven baptisms
- Seven resurrections
- Seven raptures
- NT epistles written to seven churches
- Seven miracles in the gospel of John
- Seven appearances of angels in gospels
- Seven characteristics of wisdom in James 3:17
- The words of God were purified seven times
- All the sevens of Revelation (see God's introduction to Revelation – verses 1-6, pages 2-3)
- See how and when the number seven shows up throughout the OT and NT

b. God works in patterns, and seven is a key number representing things that are \_\_\_\_\_.

- So then, because...

Human history breaks down into \_\_\_\_\_ dispensations...

These seven dispensations take place over a period of \_\_\_\_\_ millenniums...

Our God is a God of patterns, it only makes sense that God's pattern of sevens will be followed as it concerns church history

**The reason God gives a prophetic account of church history:**

1. The OT is primarily a book of \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Genesis thru Nehemiah describes creation, the first humans, the history of Israel and her patriarchs, in chronological *historic* order
  - b. Esther thru Malachi all fold back into the chronology of recorded OT *history* at differing and various times
2. The NT gospels and Acts are primarily books of \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Matthew through Luke describe specific *historical* events from the life and times of Jesus Christ

b. The Acts of the Apostles is not a doctrinal treatise detailing church theology... It is a historic record of the “Acts” or deeds of the apostles and lists details concerning *early church history*. Therefore, the book of Acts is primarily a transitional *history* book...

c. Major important *historic* transitions in Acts:

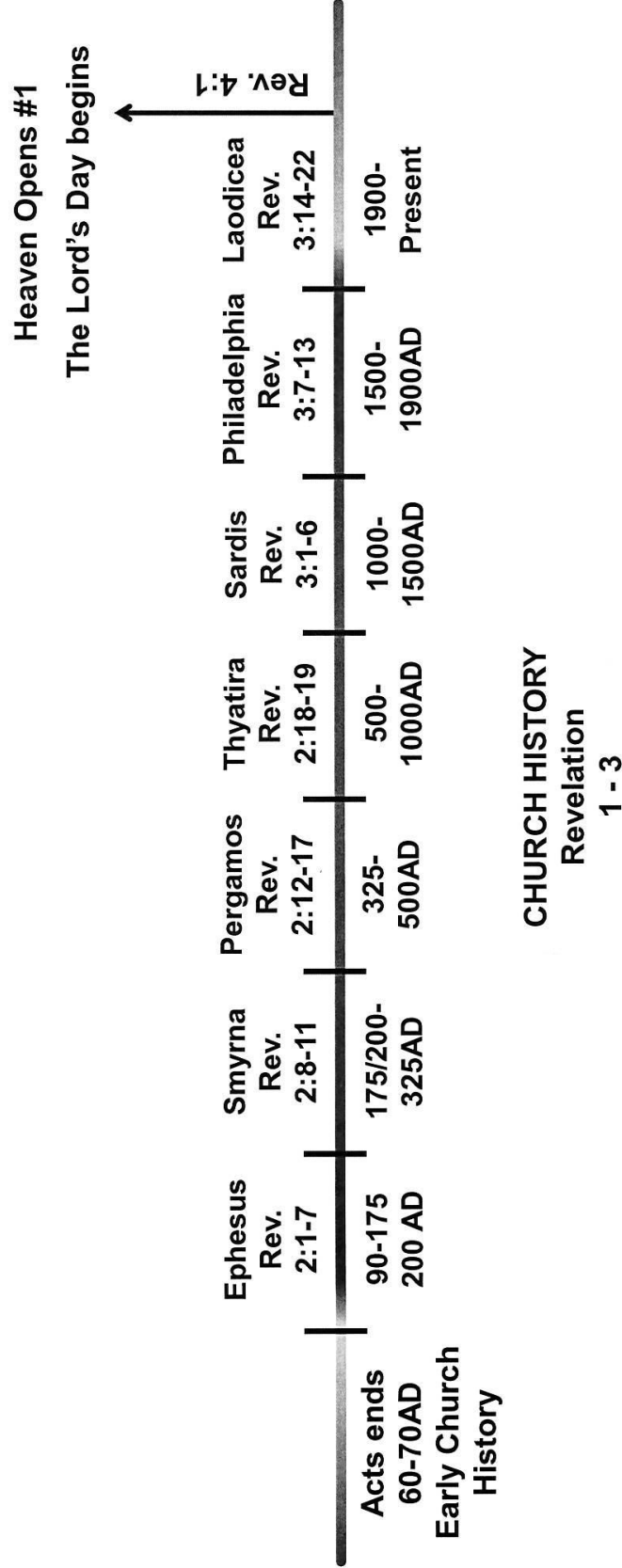
- From OT methods and doctrine to NT methods and doctrine. The common thought is that the NT begins chronologically with Matthew and the gospel records. Yet, the Bible says something different – Mt. 11:7... 13; Heb. 9:15-17
- From Jew to Gentile
- From the Nation of Israel to the Church
- From the literal physical *kingdom of heaven* in Zion to the spiritual *kingdom of God* inside the believer
- From Peter the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7-8) to Paul the apostle to the Gentiles (Ro. 11:13)
- From God’s headquarters in the Jerusalem church to his new sending base in Antioch, Syria
- From Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), and then to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 13-28)
- Acts details \_\_\_\_\_ *church history* from approximately 33 AD – 60 AD. It is the one book that teaches us early church history. It contains 28 chapters, yet it does not take us past the first century...

Without Acts we would be totally confused concerning: the NT church, the pastoral epistles, the general epistles, and Revelation – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John ... and then jump to Romans ???

- Revelation 2-3 picks up in *church history* where the Book of Acts leaves off, and in turn *completes* (7 periods) and seals the entire Bible as one continuous *historic record* from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22!

NEXT WEEK: Our textual study of church history begins in Revelation 2

# Seven churches of Revelation



Addendum #3