

The Second Key



“The Things Which Are”

Chapters 2-3



The Church Age Pentecost to the Rapture

And The Kingdom Parables

Matthew 13

Revelation 2:4-1

Secular History

- Jewish Period of the Church
- New Testament is written.
- 64 Fire destroys most of Rome. Nero blames the Christians

- 312 The Church under Constantine
- 325 Council of Nicea convened by Constantine. Nicene Creed established
- 350 Christianity reaches Ethiopia
- 401 Innocent I becomes Pope and claims universal jurisdiction over the Roman Church.

- 1517 Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church.
- 325 Council of Nicea convened by Constantine. Nicene Creed established
- 350 Christianity reaches Ethiopia
- 401 Innocent I becomes Pope and claims universal jurisdiction over the Roman Church.

- 1520 Martin Luther created his "German" translation of the Bible
- William Tyndale created his English Bible (first)
- 1735 Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening
- 1604 King James of England commissioned the "King James" translation of the Bible.

- 1816 American Bible Society
- 1830 Finney revivals (Rochester)
- 1857 Hudson Taylor to China
- 1867 Livingston's Missionary
- 1880 Moody's conversion
- 1872 Moody begins preaching

- 1900's Widespread revival characterized by speaking in tongues, gives birth to Pentecostal movement
- 1948 Israel is recognized as a nation once again.
- 1967 Jerusalem becomes capital of Israel

Pentecost - The Church is Born

The Backslidden, Loveless Church
The Ephesus Church Period
 Rev. 2:1-7
 The Loveless Church
 "Thou hast left thy first love"
 "Fear none of the things which you shall suffer"



The Persecuted Church
The Smyrna Church Period
 Rev. 2:8-11
 The Suffering Church
 "Fear none of the things which you shall suffer"



The Licentious Compromising Church
The Pergamos Church Period
 Rev. 2:12-17
 The Compromising Church
 "You have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam"



The Corrupt Church of the Middle Ages
The Thyatira Church Period
 Rev. 2:18-29
 The Worthy Church of the Dark Ages
 "You suffered that woman Jezebel"



The Church of the Reformation and the Beginning of the Protestant Movement
The Sardis Church Period
 Rev. 3:1-6
 The Barley Alive Church of the Reformation
 "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead"



The Apostate Church of the Last Days
The Laodicea Church Period
 Rev. 3:14-22
 The Lukewarm Church
 "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue you out of my mouth"



The Parable of the Sower

Rev. 2:1-7
 Mt. 13:3-9
 How the kingdom begins, by sowing the seed then some seed falls:



1. By the wayside
2. Upon stony places
3. Among the thorns
4. On good ground

The Parable of the Tares
 Mt. 13:24-30
 The tares are entangled and grow along side the wheat. Will be separated at the judgment and the tares cast in the Lake of Fire.



The Parable of the Mustard Seed
 Mt. 13:31-32
 When a small seed is planted it can grow into an extremely large tree



The Parable of the Leaven
 Mt. 13:33
 A little leaven good or bad will infect the entire loaf.



The Parable of the Hidden Treasure
 Mt. 13:44
 The hidden treasure of the Kingdom of God is in the Scriptures. Those who dig it out will be rich in faith and love for God.



The Parable of the Pearl
 Mt. 13:45-46
 What will a man give to purchase the most valued thing in all the universe? This church is the example of what being sold out is all about, taking the Gospel to other people.



The Seven Kingdom Parables



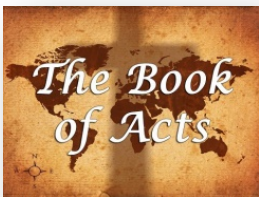
The hidden treasure of the Kingdom of God is in the Scriptures. Those who dig it out will be rich in faith and love for God.

The Parable of the Net
 Mt. 13:47-50
 Complacent and lukewarm, plenty of money they have need of nothing. Christ is knocking on the door, who will let Him in?





The Church Age



Ephesus
Smyrna
Pergamos
Thyatira
Sardis
Philadelphia
Laodicea

Rapture
↑
Rev.4:1



The letters to seven churches of Asia Minor found in Revelation chapters 2-3 are generally recognized to be symbolic of the chronological history of the Christian church from the time of the apostles till the time Jesus comes back for His church which is called the Rapture. In this chapter we will look at the history and the message given to each church and how it relates to the overall church today. It also will look at the corresponding Kingdom Parables that Jesus taught in Matthew 13. The parables are chronologically sequenced, and directly related to the seven churches of Revelation, thus giving us further revelational insight.

Note: The message to the church beginning with Ephesus not only did it apply to that church, but to those who would come after it. By the time the last of the churches, which is Laodicea, came into the prophetic picture all of the warnings applied to it also. It is no wonder that in the world today you can still find churches exhibiting the problems, and /or blessings found in the first six church ages preceding it.

Church Timeline

(Revelation 2-3)



A.D.

33-100

Ephesus Rev. 2:1-7

The backslidden, loveless church

Parable of the Sower, Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23



100-313

Smyrna Rev. 2:8-11

The Persecuted Church

Parable of the Wheat & Tares, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43



313-538

Pergamos Rev. 2:12-17

The licentious, compromising church

Parable of the Mustard Seed, Matthew 13:31-32



538-1514

Thyatira Rev. 2:18-29

The lax, corrupt church

Parable of the Leaven, Matthew 13:33-35



1514-1798

Sardis Rev. 3:1-6

The dead church

Parable of Treasure Hid, Matthew 13:44



1798-1866

Philadelphia Rev. 3:7-13

A favored, faithful church

Parable of the Pearl, Matthew 13:45-46



1866 - Rapture

Laodicea Rev. 3:14-22

The lukewarm church

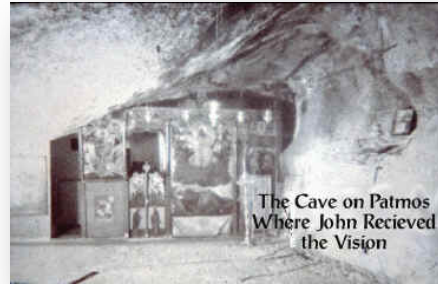
Parable of the Net, Matthew 13:47-50



The Island of Patmos



¹ Island of Patmos from the air



John's Cave on Patmos

Revelation 1:9-11, ⁹"I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."



he "apostle that Jesus loved,"² John was given the responsibility of caring for Jesus' mother, Mary for the rest of her life.³ It was John who wrote the Gospel of John (John 21:24), and was exiled on the Island of Patmos. There, he had one more important job to do.

The island of Patmos is today part of Greece. It is located among the Sporades group of islands in the Aegean Sea near the west coast of Turkey. It is a relatively small member of the group of Islands, measuring only about 6 by 10 miles with a very irregular coastline.

The Romans used Patmos, and numerous other remote bases like it, as a place for political or religious prisoners. In these locations the prisoners had no legal rights but were held indefinitely without charge or trial, subject solely to the whim of the Roman emperor.

¹ Graphics from <http://momentin.com/images/chap01>

² John 21:20

³ John 19:26-27

According to Eusebius, John was sent to Patmos in the year A.D. 95 by the Roman Emperor Domitian, but was released less than 2 years later. Since he and all of the twelve apostles were roughly the same age as Jesus, John would by that time have been well over 90 years old, making him very likely the only apostle to survive to old age. All the rest were martyred much earlier.



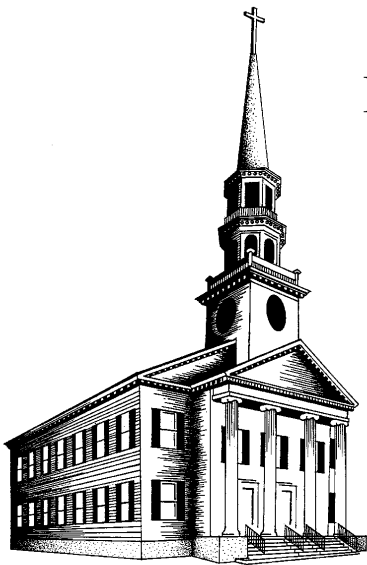
The Messages to the 7 Church's of Asia Minor



Messages of hope and of warning
Concerning the
“Church Age”

(The Things which are)

A.D. 33 - Rapture



And their Corresponding Kingdom

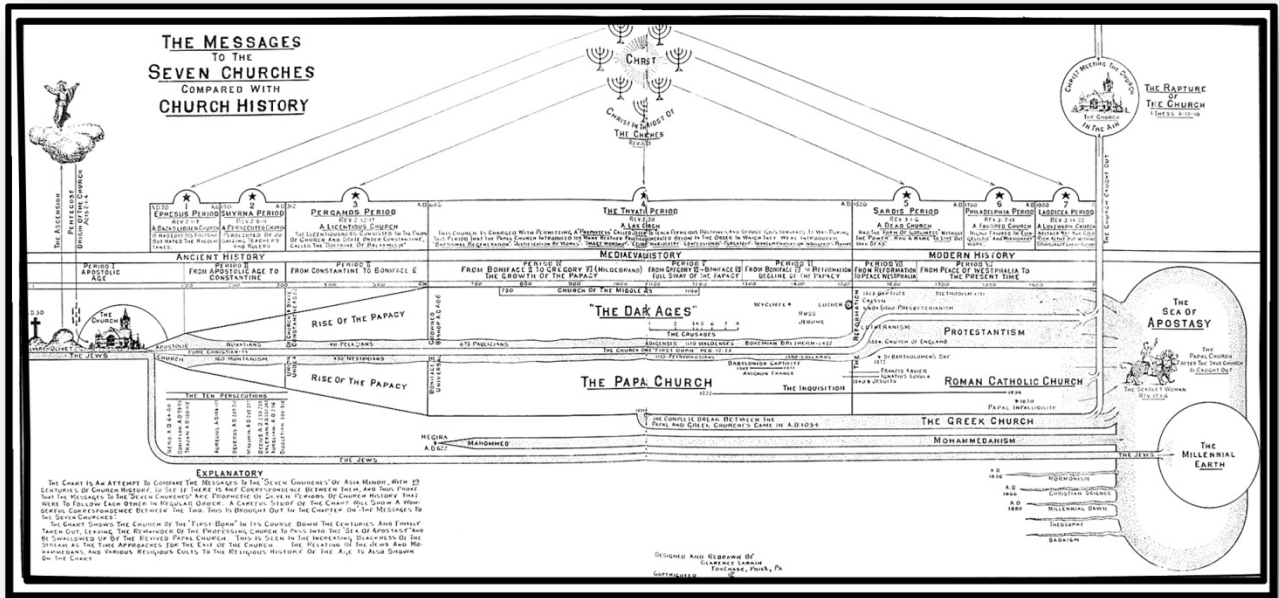




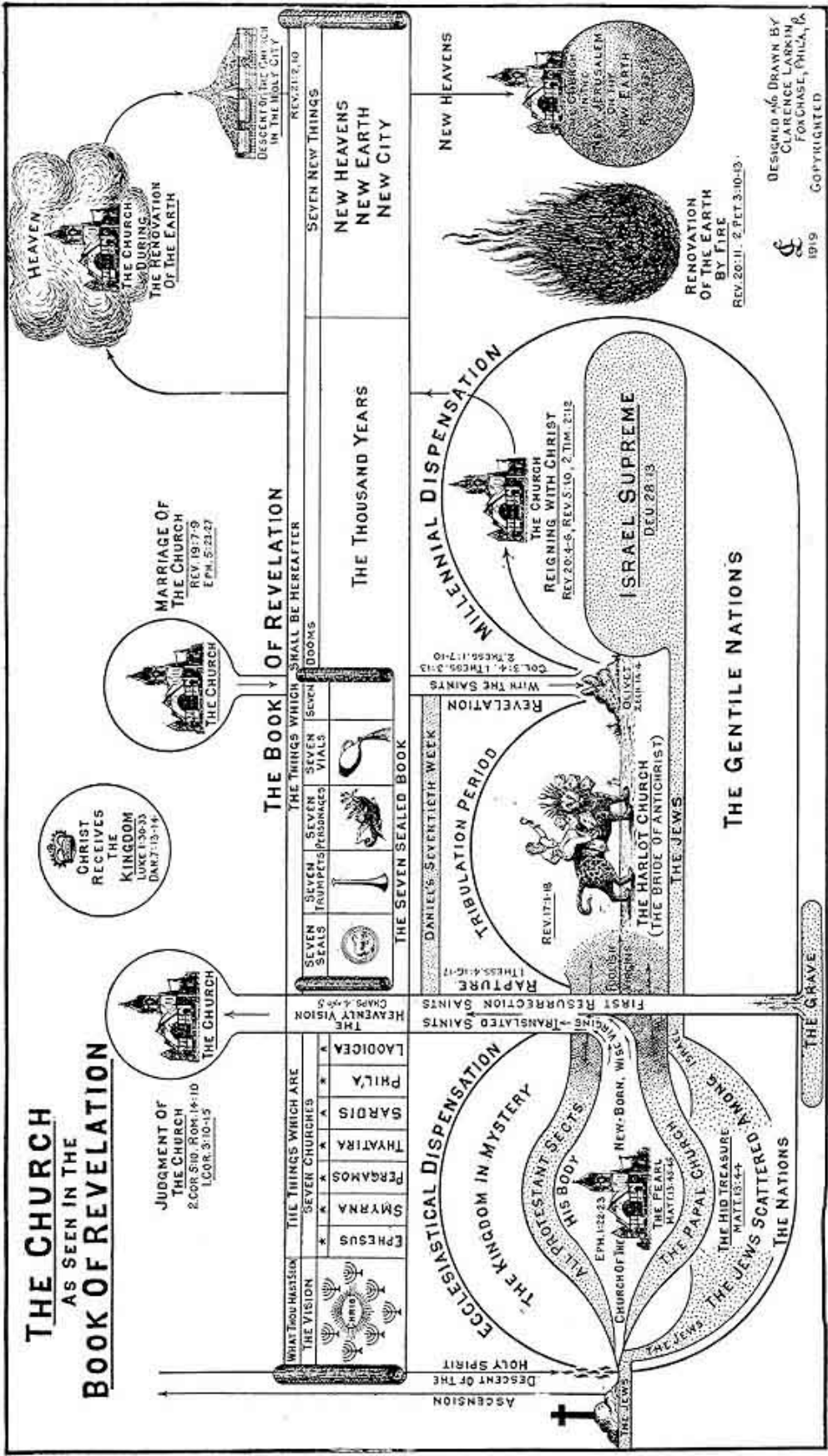
Chapter 2-3



The Message to the Churches



Approx. 33 A.D. to the Rapture



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The Church at Ephesus

A Bit of History



Library at Ephesus



Ephesus was an ancient city located in southwestern Asia, in what is today western Turkey. Ephesus in its time was a leading city in that part of the world. The Romans gave it the title "the first and greatest metropolis of Asia." Its greatest non-Christian attractions were the pagan Temple of Diana, known as "Diana of the Ephesians," and its open theater, capable of containing 50,000 spectators - then largest in the world, and still very big in comparison to modern-day stadiums. The city was most famous for the nearby Temple of Artemis (completed around 550 BC), one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Among many other monumental buildings are the Library of Celsus.

Paul first visited the city near the end of his Second Missionary Journey, about 51 A.D., while returning from Greece to Syria (Acts 18:18-21). He at that time remained only briefly, as he was hurrying to be back at Jerusalem for Pentecost, but he left Priscilla and Aquila behind to carry on with the work of the Gospel.

Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, arriving from an overland journey through Asia Minor. This time he remained for about three years, gaining such popularity that everyone heard the Word of the Lord preached.

Acts 19:10 (NIV), "...all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of The Lord."

The apostle John, according to one tradition, spent many years in Ephesus while caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, as The Lord had commanded him (John 19:26-27). Some believe that both Mary and John are buried there.

The Message to the Ephesian Church

(Revelation 2:1-7)

¹“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ²‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. ⁶Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’



he Backslidden, Loveless Church – Ephesus was a church that was once strong, but **lost its first love**. It had become lifeless, forgetting the passion and excitement of its original love for Jesus.

Commendation: “I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot stand them that are evil; and you have tried them, who say they are Apostles, and are not, and found them to be liars. For my namesake have labored and not grown weary.”

The Complaint: “...You have left your first love”

The Warning: To repent or your candlestick will be removed out of its place

The Praise: That they hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which God hates also.

The Promise: “To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

A Closer Look at Ephesus



he complaint that Christ makes against this Church is that it “**had left its first love.**” Its character is seen in its very name, for Ephesus means to “let go,” “to relax.”

How did they lose their First Love?⁴

The first love which characterized the Ephesians was the zeal and eagerness with which they embraced their salvation as they realized they loved Christ because He first loved them (1 John 4:19) and that it was, in fact, His love for them that had made them “alive together with Christ.” So overwhelmed were they by the joy that came from understanding their former state—dead in trespasses and sins—and their new life in Christ, that they exhibited the fruit of that joy (Ephesians 2:1-5). Because of God’s great love for the Ephesians, they were “made alive in Christ” and that new life was exhibited in the passion of gratitude. That passion for the Savior spilled over onto one another and out to those in the culture they inhabited, corrupt as it was.

Jesus commends the Ephesians for their many good works and hard work. They tested teachers to see whether their professions were real; they endured hardship and persevered without growing weary. They had **LOST THEIR WARMTH AND ZEAL FOR CHRIST**, and when that happened, they began to “go through the motions” of good works, motivated not by the love of and for Christ, but by the works themselves. What was once a love relationship cooled into mere religion. Their passion for Him became little more than cold orthodoxy.

Surrounded by paganism and false teachers, the Ephesian church would have had ample opportunity to correct false doctrine and confront heretical teachers. If they did so for any reason other than love for Christ and a passion for His truth, however, they would have lost their way. Instead of pursuing Christ with the devotion they once showed, much like a bride who follows her groom “through the desert” (Jeremiah 2:2), the Ephesians were in danger of **FALLING AWAY** from Christ completely. This is why He warns those who have “ears to hear” to prove the reality of their salvation by returning to Him and rekindling the love that had begun to cool. No doubt there were among the Ephesians those whose profession was false and whose hearing had become dulled. He warns the rest not to follow them, but to repent and return to Him with the passion they once had for Him.

⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/left-first-love.html>

Ephesus had become a Backslidden Church

(33-100 A.D.)

John, who founded the church, warned it of what could happen in his parting message.

Acts 20:29-30, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous ‘wolves’ enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, ‘speaking perverse things,’ to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

The significance of this warning is seen in the commendation of the Message.

Revelation 2:6, “But this you have, that you ‘hate’ the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate.”

Here John’s “wolves” are called Nicolaitans. They were not a sect, but a group in the Church who were trying to establish a “**Priestly Order**,” probably trying to model the Church after the Old Testament order of Priests, Levites, and common people.

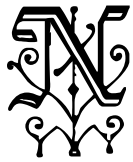
This is seen in the meaning of the word, which is from “**NIKO**” to conquer, to overthrow, and “**LAOS**” the people or laity. The object was to establish a “**HOLY ORDER OF MEN**,” and place them over the laity, which was foreign to the New Testament plan, and call them not pastors, but **CLERGY, BISHOPS, ARCHBISHOPS, CARDINALS, and POPES**. Here we have the origin of the dogma of “**APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION**,”⁵ and the separation of the Clergy from the Laity, a thing that God hates. The Church at Ephesus was not deceived by the Nicolaitans, but the church recognized them as false apostles and liars.

The character of the Church at Ephesus is a fair outline of the Church Period from A.D. 33 to A.D. 100.

⁵ <http://www.bible.ca/cath-apostolic-succession.htm>



The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans



icolaitan⁶ comes from two Greek words: *Nikao* which means to conquer, and *Lao* which means the laity. Nicolaitan means, "To conquer the laity."

Now why is this a terrible thing? It is terrible because God has never placed His church in the hands of an elected leadership which moves with political mindedness. He has placed His church in the care of God-ordained, Spirit-filled, Word-living men who lead the people through feeding them the Word.

He has not separated the people into classes so that the masses are led by a holy priesthood. It is true that the leadership must be Holy, but then so must be the whole congregation. Further, there is no place in the Word where priests or ministers or such mediate between God and the people, nor is there a place where they are separated in their worship of the Lord. God wants all to love and serve Him together. Nicolaitans destroys those precepts and instead separates the ministers from the people and makes the leaders overlords instead of servants. The problem lay in two words: "elders" (presbyters) and "overseers" (bishops).



History

Though Scripture shows that there are several elders in each church, some began (Ignatius among them) to teach that the idea of a bishop was one of preeminence or authority and control over the elders.

The truth of the matter is the word "**ELDER**" signifies who the person is, while the word "**BISHOP**" signifies the office of the same man. The elder is the man, Bishop is the office of the man. "Elder" always has and always will refer simply to man's chronological age in the Lord. He is an elder, not because he is elected or ordained, etc., but because he is **OLDER**. He is more seasoned, trained, not a novice, reliable because of experience and long-standing proof of his Christian experience. But the bishops did not stick to the epistles of Paul, but rather they went to Paul's account of the time he called the elders from Ephesus to Miletus in Acts 20. In Acts 20:17 the record states, "*elders*" were called and then in v28 they are called overseers (bishops). And these bishops (no doubt political minded and anxious for power) insisted that Paul had given the meaning that "overseers" were more than the local elder with official capacity only in his own church.

⁶The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans <https://churchages.net/en/book/doctrine-of-the-nicolaitanes/>



To them a bishop was now one with extended authority over many local leaders. Such a concept was neither scriptural nor historical, yet even a man of the stature of Polycarp leaned toward such organization. Thus, that which started as a deed in the first age was made a literal doctrine and so it is today. Bishops still claim power to control men and deal with them as they desire, placing them where they so will in the ministry. This denies the leadership of the Holy Ghost Who said,

Acts 13:2, "... Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them."

It is clear that here it is the Holy Spirit of God who is calling Saul (Paul) and Barnabas out to minister as He has called them to do.

Matthew 20:25-28, "But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Matthew 23:8-9, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, Which is in heaven."

Looking Back at Ephesus

⁷In Miletus during his final journey to Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul sought to meet with the elders of the church in Ephesus. When the elders arrived, Paul warned them.

Acts 20:29-31, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch..."

A few decades after this warning to the church at Ephesus Jesus commends the church for having heeded the warning about false teachers, but warning them in turn that unless they repent and return to loving God as they first did, their lampstand will be taken from them (Rev. 2:1-5).

They failed to heed Jesus's warning, and as you can see in the picture above Jesus made good on His words. The weed-covered desolation symbolizes the state of Christianity today in Turkey. Turkey, once the heartland of Paul's ministry, is 99% Muslim and devoid of Bible-based

⁷ <http://israeljerusalem.com/ephesus-church.htm>

Christianity today. Can what happened in Ephesus happen again in these times that we live in? Truth be known, it has already begun in Europe and North America.



The church in Ephesus clearly loved people as we can see by Jesus' description of their works (v3) and of their ministry. They followed God's commands and were careful about what activity happened within the church (v2). However, there was something that burdened God's heart and Jesus' rebuke to the Ephesians is a clear call to return to the greatest commandment of loving God first.

The church changed its focus from what it had been, which was the love of God and people to now judging people based on their doctrine. Not that doctrine is bad, but that it is not the end goal. Doctrine is the declaration of what the church believes. Doctrine never trumps the love of God, and therefore a message of rebuke is given ... **RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE!**

The closing words of Jesus to the church at Ephesus were intended to motivate the Christians there to remember, to repent and return to their former acts of love. Jesus' final words to the church ends with a promise, (v7) "To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

In the words of Jesus, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

⁸ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-3-church-ephesus-lost-love>

The Parable of the SOWER



The Church at Ephesus
and its corresponding Church Age
Under the Roman Empire
(33 A.D. to 100 A.D.)

A Sower went forth to sow and...



Matthew 13:3-9, "Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ "And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ "Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶ "But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷ "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸ "But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Ref. Mt.18-22, Mk.4:1, Lu.8:4)



he Parable of the Sower does not begin with "The kingdom of heaven is like" because it describes how the kingdom begins. It begins with the preaching of the Word, the planting of the seed in the hearts of people. When we say, "Let me plant this thought in your mind," we express the idea of this parable.

The seed is God's Word, the various soils represent different kinds of hearts, and the varied results show the different responses to the Word of God. Let us look at four main points brought out in the parable of Matthew 13:3-9.

1. Some seed **fell by the wayside** and birds came and ate the seed. In v19 Jesus explains that this is the person who hears the Word but does not understand it. Satan will come and steal what truth he has from out of a person's heart.
2. Some seed fell upon **stony places**, where there was not much soil to root themselves. As they began to grow they withered away because they did not have enough soil to root themselves in. In v20 Jesus relates the stony places with those who receive the Word with joy but, because he is not rooted in the Scriptures, will fall away when times of trial and persecution come.
3. Some seed fell among the **thorns**, the thorns sprang up and choked the seed and the seed never grew and died away. In v22 Jesus tells us that the person receives the Word but the cares of this life and the pursuit of riches will choke the Word within him and he will be unfruitful.
4. Some seed fell on **good ground**; it grew and produced much fruit, some 100 times, some 60 times, some 30 times as much fruit. In v23 Jesus likens the "good ground" to those who hear the Word and understand it. They will also bear fruit, some more than others, but still they will bear fruit.

The Parable of the Sower is a picture of the church at Ephesus, the backslidden and loveless church, and to its prophetic dispensation. It is the church that left her first love.

The Ephesus period of church history was the beginning of the church age. The seed (Word of God) was being sowed into men's hearts. There were those who heard the Word, but did not understand it. Satan came and stole what truth they did have out of their heart. Some who had received the Word and for a season grew in the Word, but never became rooted in the Word. In time, when trials and persecution came, they fell away. Still others let the cares of life and the pursuit of things choke out the Word and they became unfruitful. For those who receive the Word and become grounded in it, it will change their lives and they bear fruit and carry the Gospel message to other people and nations. With this group, the Great Commission found its starting point and people's lives began to be changed.

So ends the message to the church of Ephesus and to its corresponding church age 33-100 A.D.



The Church at Smyrna

A Bit of History



Smyrna ruins



Smyrna was a coastal city in what is today western Turkey. Smyrna was for a long time a pro-Roman city, serving as a regional center for worship of the "divine" Roman emperor. It was the site of the temple to Tiberius, who reigned at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This ancient form of human idolatry is prophesied to occur yet again on a worldwide scale prior to the return of Jesus Christ (i.e.: The Abomination of Desolation by the antichrist.)

Despite the pagan environment, Christians in Smyrna were true and faithful. Of the seven churches addressed by the Lord, only Smyrna and Philadelphia were spoken of with approval. In later years, Polycarp, a student of the apostle John, served as a leader of the church at Smyrna, and he was martyred there, burned at the stake, about 155 A.D.

The Church at Smyrna

(Revelation 2:8-11)

The Persecuted Church under the Roman Empire – A.D. 100 to A.D. 313

A suffering church, enduring hardships for its faith

The Persecution: “I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, but you are rich; and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.

The Exhortation: “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you shall be tested ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you a Crown of Life.”

The Promise: He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (Lake of Fire).

A Closer Look at Smyrna



he Church in its “Ephesian Period,” having lost its “First Love,” the Lord is now about to “chastise” it, so as to cause it to return to Him. Smyrna has for its root meaning “bitterness,” and means “Myrrh,” an ointment associated with death, and we see in the meaning of the word a prophecy of the persecution and death which was to befall the members of the Smyrna church. They were told not to “fear” the things that they should be called on to suffer, but to be faithful “unto” death, not “until” death. That is, not until the end of their “natural” life. They were not to “recant” when called upon to face a martyr’s death, but remain faithful until death relieved them of their suffering. The reward would be a “**Crown of Life.**” This is the martyr’s crown.

They were told that the author of their suffering would be the Devil, and its duration would be ten days, which was doubtless a prophetic reference to the “Ten Great Persecutions” under the Roman Emperors, beginning with Nero, A.D. 64. Seven of these Great Persecutions occurred during this Smyrna Period of church history. Or it may refer to the 10 years of the last and fiercest persecution under Diocletian. It is estimated that approximately 5000 believers of this church period were fed to the lions in Rome.

This period extended from A. D. 100 to Constantine, A.D. 313.

The period of persecution was to last for a specified period. The persecution during this period lasted from the time of Domitian in A.D. 96 until Diocletian and his successor Galerius in A.D. 311. Depending on when counting begins, 10 or 11 periods of persecution can be located during this period. If we start at Domitian, (John was on

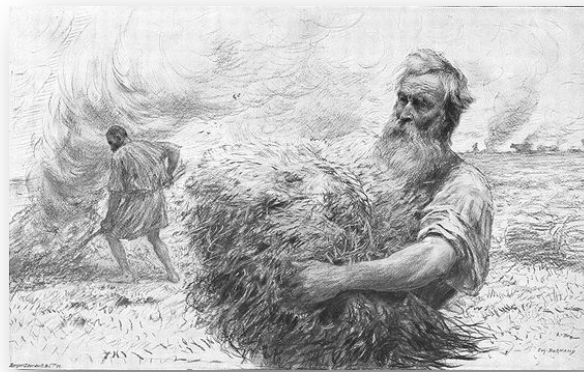
Patmos because of Domitian) then there are 10 periods. With Nero as the start, there are 11 periods.

1	Nero	A.D. 54- 68	Paul beheaded and Peter crucified
2	Domitian	A.D. 81-96	John exiled
3	Trajan	A.D. 98-117	Ignatius burned at the stake
4	Marcus Aurelius	A.D. 161-180	Justin Martyr killed
5	Severus	A.D. 193-211	
6	Maximinus	A.D. 235-238	
7	Decius	A.D.249-251	
8	Valerian	A.D. 253-260	
9	Aurelian	A.D. 270-275	
10	Diocleation	A.D. 284-305	
11	Galerius	A.D. 305-311	

The Parable of the tares

The Church at Smyrna
and its corresponding Church Age⁹
Under the Roman Empire

(100 A.D. to 313 A.D.)



Matthew 13:24-30 (NASB), ²⁴ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”

⁹ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>



The second mystery is the parable of the tares and the wheat and is related to the church in Smyrna, which represents the condition of the church under the persecution of the Roman Empire between the end of the first century and the beginning of the fourth (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43; cf. Rev. 2:8-11). Smyrna signifies myrrh, an aromatic spice with a very bitter flavor used in the preparation of the body for burial (John 19:39-40). Myrrh, therefore, is related to suffering.

The church in Smyrna is the continuation of the church in Ephesus, that is, after it became desirable. She passed through much suffering under the persecution of the Roman Empire because she called on the Name and read and prayed the word. This happened because the enemy, being frustrated, came to attack her.

A similar situation happened at the beginning of the church in Jerusalem. As soon as it was raised up, the brothers and sisters were calling on the name of the Lord (Acts. 2:21; 7:59). Then the Jewish religion used people like Saul to persecute those who called on the name of the Lord (9:14, 21). Because of this situation, the church in Jerusalem stopped calling on the Lord. But it was not like this with the church in Smyrna. She was the continuation of the church in Ephesus, and the saints continued to call on the Name and pray-read the Lord's word, even unto death. It doesn't matter how much we are persecuted; we must continue to call on the name of the Lord, because in the spirit we receive life.

According to history, the church in Smyrna passed through ten great persecutions during this time (Rev. 2:10). During this period many saints died, but the church continued to be living and steadfast. Their stand was due to the Name they were calling on and the word they were reading and praying. Because they exercised their spirit by calling and pray-reading, the saints remained faithful and struggled to advance, in spite of the actions of the enemy who "sowed tares in the midst of the wheat."

Revelation 2:13 records the death of Antipas. Even though his name is mentioned in the letter to Pergamos, everything indicates that he was a contemporary of Smyrna because it is dealing with a martyr of the church. The name Antipas means against all. The Bible calls him the faithful witness. The church was calling on the name of the Lord and pray-reading the word while he was living. The Lord encouraged the church in Smyrna to not fear the things that she had to suffer. She should be faithful unto death in order to receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Comparison: Letter to Smyrna, Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and Church History

Both the parable and the letter seem to point to the period immediately following the apostolic period. There is now orderly sowing as opposed to the scattering of seed along the highways and among stones and thorns. The enemy is working hard to destroy the church both from without (persecution) and from within. The first false teachings are appearing within the Christian church.

Please bear with me as I take this allegory to the next level. Most wheat is harvested and made into bread, which is eaten for nourishment. But the best wheat kernels are reserved for seed. That seed must die and be planted in the ground if it is to multiply.

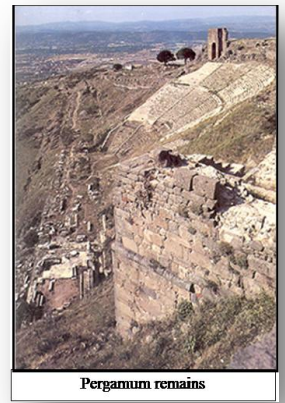
Death is mentioned three times in the short letter to Smyrna. The first mention is of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The second mentioning admonishes the believers to be faithful **unto** death. The third time, the Lord says that the second death will not harm Smyrna.

The second period in the history of the Christian church is a period of rapid growth in spite of opposition both from without and from within.



The Church at Pergamos

A Bit of History



Pergamum remains



ergamum, or Pergamos, was a major city of Mysia, in Asia Minor, in what is today Turkey. Located about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, it was the capital for the Pergamenian kings until about 133 B.C. when it came under Roman control. The Romans made it the central city of their new province of "Asia."

In this town was first discovered the art of making parchment, which was called ¹⁰pergamena. Parchment, an ancient writing material made from the processed skins of animals, most often that of calves, sheep and goats, was invented in Pergamum to free the great library there from dependence upon imported papyrus which mainly came from Egypt. Pergamos had a vast library of 200,000 volumes, which was moved to Egypt by Antony and presented to Cleopatra.

The city was greatly addicted to idolatry, being filled with statues and altars. In 29 B.C. a temple for the worship of Caesar Augustus was erected in Pergamum (Caesar Augustus was the Roman emperor who called the census that resulted in Jesus Christ being born in Bethlehem Luke 2:1). However, worship of Caesar and subsequent emperors was long rivaled there by the cult of the pagan god Zeus, the symbol of which was a *serpent*. Pergamum's throne-like altar of Zeus, that some have speculated was the symbolic "Satan's throne" reference in Revelation 2:13, and is now in the Berlin Museum.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://pergamena.net/history.htm>

¹¹ <http://www1.cbn.com/700club/seat-satan-nazi-germany>

The Third Message to The Church at Pergamos

(Revelation 2:12-17)

The licentious, compromising church under Rome – 313 A.D. to 538 A. D. The church that had become worldly.

The church that fell under the influence of the pagan culture in which it lived.

The Commendation: “I know your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan’s seat is: and you hold fast to My name, and have not denied My faith, even in the days where Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells.”

The Complaint: “But I have a few things against you, because you have there with you some that hold the “Doctrine of Balaam”, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So you also have them that hold to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

The Warning: “Repent! Or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against you with the Sword of my Mouth.”

The Promise: “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches; to him that overcomes will I give to eat of the Hidden Manna, and will give him a White Stone, and on the stone a New Name written, which no man knows except he that received it.”

A Closer Look at Pergamos

In this message Pergamos is spoken of as “Satan’s Seat.” When Attalus III (170-133 BC), the Priest-King of the Chaldeans, fled before the conquering Persians to Pergamos and settled there, Satan shifted his capital from Babylon to Pergamos. Attalus III was also known as the last King of Pergamum.

¹²The Roman Emperor Domitian in A.D. 83 persecuted the followers of Christ, and Antipas was one of the martyrs (Rev.2:13). Antipas was consecrated “Bishop of Pergamos” by John during the reign of Emperor Domitian. His name means "against all" which could mean that he was standing alone for the faith against the forces of evil.

Soon Satan changed his tactics and began to exalt the Church, and through Constantine united the Church and State, and offered all kinds of inducements for Pagans to come into the Church. Constantine’s motive was more political than religious. He wished to weld his Christian and Pagan subjects into one people, and so consolidate his Empire.

The result of this union was that two false and pernicious doctrines crept into the Church. The first was the “**Doctrine of Balaam,**” and the second the “**Doctrine of the Nicolaitans.**” The latter we have already considered under the Message to the Church at Ephesus. The foothold it had secured in the Church was seen in the First Great Council of the Church held at Nicaea, in A.D. 325. The Council was composed of about 1500 delegates, the laymen outnumbering the Bishops 5 to 1. It was a stormy council, full of intrigue and political methods, and from the supremacy of the “Clergy” over the “Laity” it was evident that the “Doctrine of the Nicolaitans” had secured a strong and permanent foothold.

History

The “Doctrine of Balaam” is disclosed in the story of Balaam found in the Book of Numbers, chapters 22 to 25. When the Children of Israel on their way to Canaan had reached the land of Moab, Balak the king of Moab sent for Balaam the Son of Beor, to come and curse them. When the Lord would not permit Balaam to curse Israel, he suggested to Balak that he invite them to the licentious feasts of “Baal-Peor,” and thus cause Israel to fall into a snare that would so anger the Lord that he would Himself destroy them. This Balak did, and the result was that when the men of Israel went to those sensual feasts and saw the “daughters of Moab,” they committed whoredoms with them, which so kindled God’s anger that He sent a plague that destroyed 42,000 of them.

¹² <http://latter-rain.com/escha/antipas.htm>

Now the word “Pergamos” means “Marriage,” and when the Church entered into a union with the State it was guilty of “Spiritual Fornication” or “Balaamism.”

The “Balaam Method” that Constantine employed was to give to the Bishops of the Church a number of imposing buildings called Basilicas for conversion into churches, lavish them in the gift of money. He also supplied superb vestments for the clergy, and soon the Bishop found himself clad in costly vestments, seated on a lofty throne in the apse of the Basilica, with a marble altar, adorned with gold and gems, on a lower level in front of him.

A sensuous form of worship was introduced, the character of the preaching was changed, and the great Pagan Festivals were adopted with little alteration to please the Pagan members of the church, and attract Pagans to the church. For illustration, the Winter Solstice falls on the 21st day of December, which is the shortest day in the year. It is not until the 25th that the day begins to lengthen, that day was regarded throughout the heathen world as the birthday of the “SUN-GOD.” It was a high festival, celebrated at Rome by the Great Games of the Circus. It was found advisable to change the birthday of the Son of God from an April time frame, (1st day of the month of Nissan when He was probably born), to December 25th, because as He was the “Sun of Righteousness.” What more appropriate birthday could He have than the birthday of the Pagan “sun-god”?

It was at this time that “**POST-MILLENNIAL** Views” had their origin. As the Church had become rich and powerful, it was suggested that by the union of Church and State a condition of affairs would develop that would usher in the Millennium without the return of Christ. Since some scriptural support was needed for such a doctrine, it was claimed that the Jews had been cast off “forever,” and that all the prophecies of Israel’s future glory were intended for the Church. (*See note below)

This “Period” extends from the accession of Constantine A.D. 313 to A. D. 538, when Boniface III was crowned “Universal Bishop.”

* Note: The teaching that the church has replaced Israel is known today as “Replacement Theology” and is a false doctrine or teaching.

Replacement Theology basically teaches that the church has completely replaced Israel in God’s plan. Adherents of Replacement Theology believe that the Jews are no longer God’s chosen people and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel. There are really only two views:

1. The Church is a continuation of Israel (Replacement Theology)
2. The Church is totally different and distinct from Israel

Teaching

Excerpts from the
"Doctrine of Balaam"

A Teaching Widely Taught and Accepted Throughout Christendom Today

¹³By Arlen L. Chitwood

The Doctrine



he doctrine of Balaam is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the Church today. Christians know -- as their counterparts in the Church in Pergamos did that they have been saved by grace through faith, and nothing can change that which has been brought to pass through their conversion experience. They now possess spiritual life, which can never be taken from them; and, because of the unchangeable nature of the life which they presently possess, they reason that they can conduct their lives in any manner which they choose, and it will make no difference.

“The main facet of the doctrine of Balaam which is being taught in Churches (although under a different name) today is the teaching that future blessings and rewards have been set aside for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ's finished work on Calvary and the Christian's positional standing "in Christ." In this respect, all Christians – **regardless of their conduct during the present time** -- will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.”

“However, that which is clearly taught throughout the Word of God is to the contrary. The Israelites did not sin with immunity, and neither can Christians. Sin in the camp of Israel resulted in the Israelites being overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling. And it will be no different for Christians.”

“Balaam suggested intermarriage with the Moabites, eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality as the method to destroy Israel. This is the doctrine of Balaam, to combine the things of God with the ways of the world.

This was happening in Pergamum, the church was permitting practices of the pagan Greeks to be introduced into the church.”

¹³ <http://lampbroadcast.org/plets/phtm6/DoctrineB.html>

2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

“These groups would later be known as the *Gnostics*. Today, a great example of Gnosticism is *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown. Many Christians are embracing a novel with a different Jesus. The Jesus of Gnosticism was married to Mary Magdalene, a Temple prostitute, and had a child named Sarah. Dan Brown presents this as fact, and many who might call themselves Christians are embracing this book. The same was occurring here in this Church.”

“Sexual immorality - This proto-Gnostic group was teaching sexual freedom. The Greeks at their various temples had temple prostitutes. This church allowed those who taught sexual promiscuity to be part of the leadership.”

“These very issues plague the church today, and again some churches teach the permissibility of sexual freedom, including gay rights, marriage and sexual liberty.”

“The reward for righteous living (rewards laid up in heaven)”

2 Timothy 4:7-8, “⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

“The reward for living the “Doctrine of Balaam” (loss of rewards)”

"...and I took the crown that was upon his head" (II Sam. 1:10; *cf.* Rev. 3:11).

1 Corinthians 10:21, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.”

2 John 1:8, “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.”

Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.”



The Parable of the mustard seed

The Church at Pergamos and its corresponding Church Age¹⁴ Under the Roman Empire

(313 A.D. to 538 A.D.)

Matthew 13:31-32 (NASB), ³¹ He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³² and this is smaller than all *other* seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES.”



he third mystery is related to the parable of the mustard seed, represented by the church in Pergamos (Matt. 13:31-32; Rev. 2:12-17). The word Pergamos signifies marriage, union, or high tower, and corresponds to the condition of the church from the beginning of the fourth century until the sixteenth. At the time of the church in Smyrna, the strategy the enemy used to destroy it was persecution. During the period of Pergamos, however, false Christians came in and were lifted up by the Roman emperor, Constantine, who began to give them benefits and privileges. This attitude gave entrance into the church to many self-seeking people. In other words, his intention was to exalt the Christians and put them in a “high tower.”

The church in Smyrna was not so numerous, but after the emperor Constantine began to exalt the Christians during the time of Pergamos, it rapidly increased in number. In the parable in Matthew, the small mustard seed that should have become an herb, became a great tree in which many birds roosted. These birds represent Satan (cf. Matt. 13:4, 19). When the church joins the world or politics, Satan comes to “roost,” that is, establish his throne and produce an abnormal growth in the church (Rev. 2:13).

Key Point: Persecution produces normal growth.



¹⁴ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>



The Church at Thyatira

A Bit of History



located in what is today Turkey 45 miles southeast of Pergamos, on the Hermus River, Thyatira was an ancient city of Asia Minor and was founded as Pelopia, a shrine to the Lydian sun-god Tyrinnus. The city was eventually rebuilt and made into a frontier garrison and its name changed to Thyatira.

It was also the center for the manufacturing of the craft and trade guilds that made prosperous use of the natural resources of the area. Thyatira was also famous for its highly organized trade unions (cooperatives) and specialization in purple dye made from the madder root rather than the more expensive shellfish. Lydia in Acts 16:14 was a “purple” merchant and a convert to Judaism who came from Thyatira.

Acts 16:14, “Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”

The apostle Paul visited the city on a number of occasions during his missionary travels. The ancient city is today a ruin.

The Forth Message to The Church at Thyatira

(Revelation 2:18-29)

The lax, corrupt church under the Roman Catholic Church – A.D. 538 to A.D. 1514

The church that became part of an evil cult

The Commendation: “I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last are more than the first.”

The Complaint: “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. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 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 kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and the hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.”

The Promise: “But unto you I say, unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who over comes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.”

A Closer Look at Thyatira

In His commendation of this Church, Christ lays the emphasis on their “works,” as if they depended on them, and claimed they deserved merit for “works” that went beyond what was required of them. But He had a complaint to make against them that was terrible in its implications.

He charges them not merely with permitting a bad woman, Jezebel, who called herself a “Prophetess,” to remain in the Church, but with permitting her to teach her pernicious doctrines, and to seduce the servants of God into committing fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

Who this woman was is a question. She was a pretender, and called herself a prophetess. She was of noble lineage, for she certainly was a woman of commanding influence. However, whether her real name was Jezebel or not, she was so much like her prototype in the Old Testament, (Jezebel, a Phoenician Princess and the wife of Israel’s King Ahab, 1 Kings 16-21) that Christ called her by that name.

Ahab, the King of Israel, to strengthen his kingdom, married Jezebel, and she, aided and abetted by Ahab, introduced the licentious worship of Baal into Israel and killed all the prophets of the Lord she could lay her hands on (1 Kings 18). Jezebel was a zealous idolater, extremely imperious and malicious in her natural temper. She was addicted to witchcraft and whoredoms and vicious in every way.

There is no question that whether Jezebel was a real person or not, she typified a system and that system was the **PAPAL CHURCH**. When the Papal Church introduced images and pictures into its churches for the people to bow down to, it became idolatrous. And when it set up its claim that the teaching of the Church is superior to the Word of God, it assumed the role of Prophetess.

A careful study of the Papal System from A.D. 606 to the Reformation A.D. 1520, with its institution of the Sacrifice of the Mass and other Pagan rites, reveals in it the sway of Jezebelism. It was also a period of Jezebelistic persecution, as seen in the wars of the Crusades and the rise of the Inquisition.

A careful comparison of this message with the Parable of The Leaven will reveal the wonderful correspondence between the two, the Jezebel of the Church of Thyatira, being the Woman of the parable, who inserted the Leaven of the False Doctrine into the Meal of the Gospel. This Period extended from A. D. 606 to the Reformation A. D. 1520.

The Parable of the Leaven



The Church at Thyatira
and its corresponding Church Age¹⁵
Under the Roman Catholic Church

(538 A.D. to 1514 A.D.)



Matthew 13:33 (NASB), “He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”



he fourth mystery is the parable of the leaven and is related to the church in Thyatira, which represents the condition of the church at the end of the sixth century (Matt. 13:33; cf. Rev. 2:18-29). Thyatira means **unceasing sacrifice**.

The mystery of the parable of the woman who took leaven and hid it in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened is opened by the church in Thyatira. This leaven doesn't refer to the leaven of bread but to the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:11-12). In the New Testament we live in the spirit. The word we receive from God is the truth and we must practice it. When we don't practice the words that we hear, they end up becoming doctrine and mere teaching.

In Revelation 2:18, 20 we read, “And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze. But I have something against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to

¹⁵ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>

commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.” Jezebel represents the woman who took leaven and hid it in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. At the time of the church in Pergamos, the politics of the Roman Empire were prevailing. Later, at the time of the church in Thyatira, the Roman religion began to prevail, chiefly through the Papal system. Everything began to be decided, not by God’s word, but by this woman, by this system that had its own teaching, its leaven, that caused mixture and confusion. The subtlety of this system is that the leaven of its own teaching is put into three measures of meal, which typify the Triune God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thyatira has the word, but it is mixed with leaven. It has a name—not the name of the Lord but of this prophetess.

According to history, the Catholic Church adopted the teaching of this woman and replaced the name of Jesus with the name of Mary. The Papal system and the traditions of the Roman church were valued more than the Lord’s word.

As a reaction against this, the Lord raised up Martin Luther. At that time only the clergy had access to the Bible. As Luther was studying the Bible, he read that **justification is by faith** and not by works. Through him this important truth was recovered, and the Bible became public. Moreover, at this same time the printing press was invented and the Bible became accessible to all the Christians.

Key Point: Treasure the word of God.

The Lesson of the Parable of the Leaven:

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and Leaven both show us the change from the pure, original faith to a corrupt and unnatural institution. The Parable of the Leaven gives us a little more detail in showing us that the change occurred because false religion (the woman) injected corrupt doctrine into the faith. Thus, we ought to expect corrupt teaching and corrupt practice in today’s church. So warned, we ought to be like the Bereans. When we hear or read something, we ought to search the scriptures to see whether these things are so.

Comment:

In Matthew 13, we see how Jesus Christ used parables to foretell certain situations that would affect God's church down through the centuries until His second coming. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, He forecasts that the church would begin small and that evil, outside adversaries would try to subvert it from within. In the Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), He forewarns of internal doctrinal distortions.



The Church at Sardis

A Bit of History



ardis (also spelled *Sardes*), was an ancient city of Asia Minor (today Turkey), in the 7th century B.C. the capital city of the Kingdom of Lydia. Sardis was known for its crafts and artistry, and as the first city where silver and gold coins were minted.

Sardis was taken by the Persians about 546 B.C. and then later in turn by the Athenians. When the Romans took it in 133 B.C., it became the capital of the Roman province of Lydia. The city was severely damaged by an earthquake in 17 A.D., and although the Romans reportedly spent 10,000,000 sesterces for damage repair, the city never fully recovered its former glory.

Sardis was located in the Hermus Valley, near the major road system that linked it with Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

The Fifth Message to The Church at Sardis

The Church of the Reformation Period

(Revelation 3:1-6)

The Dead Church under the Roman Catholic Church– A.D. 1514 to A.D. 1798

The church that became cold and dead, the church of the reformation period.

The Condemnation: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”

The Counsel: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things, which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.”

The Warning: “If therefore you will not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.”

The Promise: “You have a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.”

A Closer Look at Sardis



he Church at Sardis was called a Dead Church though it had a name to live. That is, it was a Formalistic Church, a church given over the “formal” or “ritualistic” worship. It had the “Form of Godliness without the Power.” The meaning of the word “Sardis” is the “escaping one,” or those who “come out” and so it is an excellent type of the Church of the Reformation Period.

This Period began when the condition of affairs in the realm dominated by the Papal Church became intolerable. A crisis soon developed when Martin Luther, on October 31, 1517 A.D., nailed his 95 Theses onto the church door at Wittenberg, Germany. From that date the Reformation set in.

By the Reformation we mean that period in history of the Christian Church when Martin Luther and a number of other reformers protested against the false teaching, tyranny and claims of the Papal Church. Soon the numbers of protesters that had joined Luther had grown to such numbers that they became known as the Protestants and a new movement was born which we now call the **PROTESTANT REFORMATION**.

This reformation had the advantage of encouraging and aiding the circulation of the Holy Scriptures that until then had been a sealed Book. The reformation also gave a voice to the revival of the doctrine of **JUSTIFICATION by FAITH**, and a reversion to more simple modes of worship. The multiplication of sects, called “**DENOMINATIONS**,” only led to bitter controversy. While the various denominations threw much light on the Word of God, they interfered greatly with the spiritual state of the Church overall, until it could truthfully be said, “*That she had a name to live and was dead.*”

The Parable of the TREASURE OF THE FIELD



The Church at Sardis
and its corresponding Church Age¹⁶
Under the Roman Catholic Church
(A.D. 1514 to 1798)



Matthew 13:44-45 (NASB), “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid *again*; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. **Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,**”



he parable of the ¹⁷"treasure hidden in the field" and the "merchant man seeking goodly pearls" appear intended to convey one and the same lesson (Matthew 13:44-46). They vary, no doubt, in one striking particular. The "treasure" was found by one who does not seem to have sought it. The "pearl" was found by one who was actually seeking pearls. But the conduct of the finders, in both cases, was precisely alike. Both "sold all" to make the thing found their own. And it is exactly at this point that the instruction of both parables agrees.

These two parables are meant to teach us that men really convinced of the importance of salvation will give up everything to win Christ and eternal life.

¹⁶ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>

¹⁷ <https://www.christianity.com/jesus/life-of-jesus/parables/treasure-pearls-and-the-kingdom-of-heaven.html>

What was the conduct of the two men our Lord describes? The one was persuaded that there was a "treasure hidden in the field," which would amply repay him - if he bought the field - however great the price that he might give. The other was persuaded that the "pearl" he had found was so immensely valuable that it would compensate him to purchase it at any cost. Both were convinced that they had found a thing of great value. Both were satisfied that it was worth a great present sacrifice to make this thing their own. Others might wonder at them. Others might think them foolish for paying such a sum of money for the field and pearl. But they knew what they were about. They were sure that they were making a good bargain.

In this single picture, the conduct of a true Christian is explained! He is what he is and does what he does in his religion because he is thoroughly persuaded that it is worth it. He comes out from the world. He puts off the old man. Like Matthew, he gives up everything, and, like Paul, he "counts all things loss" for Christ's sake. And why? Because he is convinced that Christ will make amends to him for all he gives up. He sees in Christ an endless "treasure." He sees in Christ a precious "pearl." To win Christ he will make any sacrifice. This is true faith. This is the stamp of a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.



The Church at Philadelphia

A Bit of History



Ruins at the city of Philadelphia

Philadelphia, also known as Alasehir, was a Lydian city (Lydia was an ancient kingdom in western Turkey) founded between 159-138 B.C. by Attalus II, King of Pergamum. In commemoration of the king's love and loyalty for his brother Eumenes II, the city was called Philadelphia, which in Greek meant "city of brotherly love."

The city is located in Asia Minor, today southwestern Turkey. Built on an elevated terrace, the city overlooked the nearby Hermus Valley, in which ran a Persian Royal Road. The area is very susceptible to earthquakes, and in 17 A.D. the city was completely devastated. Apparently built right above the fault line, the city continued to be severely shaken by periodic aftershocks for another 20 years after the great quake.

The Sixth Message to The Church at Philadelphia

(Revelation 3:7-13)

A Favored (faithful) Church – A.D. 1798 to A.D. 1866

A loving church and one the Lord had no negative words for.

The Commendation: “I know your works: behold I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”

The Promise: “Behold I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of My patience, I will also keep you from the hour of tribulation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold fast to what you have, that no man take your crown. Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God and He shall not go out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.”

A Closer Look at Philadelphia



here is no question about the meaning of the word Philadelphia. It means “brotherly love,” and well describes the charity and brotherly fellowship that dissipated the bitter personal animosities that characterized the theological disputants of the “Sardis Period,” and made possible the evangelistic and missionary labors of the past 200 years. Three things are said of this church:

1. It had a “*little strength.*” It was like a person coming back to life who was still very weak. It was the “dead” Sardis Church “revived,” and **Revival** was the characteristic of the Philadelphia Period. These Revivals began with George Whitefield in A.D. 1739, followed by John Wesley, Charles G. Finney and D. L. Moody.
2. It had set before it an “*open door*” that no “man” could shut. Note that this promise was made by Him who has the “Key of David,” He that “opens” and no man shuts; and “shuts” and no man “opens.” In 1793 William Carey sailed for India, where he found an “*open door,*” and since then the Lord has opened the door into China, Japan, Korea, India, Africa and the isles of the sea, until there is not a country in the world where the missionary cannot go.
3. The church was promised to be kept from the “*Hour of Temptation*” (TRIBULATION) that shall come upon ALL THE WORLD. There has never yet been a WORLDWIDE Tribulation as it is described in chapters 6 thru 19 of Revelation. Jesus Christ made a promise to this church and thus all those who trust in Him (Rev.3:10) saying “*I will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*” The word “*from*” is translated from the Greek word “*ek*” meaning “out of” (Strong’s #1537). In other words the church will be “*caught up,*” (raptured) or taken “out of” the way before this “Hour of Temptation” begins.

The Philadelphia Period covers the time between A.D. 1798 and A. D. 1866. We must not forget that the characteristics of all these Periods continue on in the Church down to the end. This is true of the Evangelistic and Missionary movements of the “Philadelphia Period,” but they are now more mechanical and based on business methods, and there is less spiritual power, and this will continue until:

Revelation 3:12, “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”

The Three Promises to the church, those who overcome

1. Be made rulers over the nations when He returns to earth. Rev. 20:4
2. Sharing in His glorious time of perfect righteousness. Ps. 2:8-9
3. The abiding presence of the blessed Savior throughout time and eternity.
Rev.22:14,16

The Parable of the PEARL OF GREAT PRICE



The Church at Philadelphia
and its corresponding Church Age¹⁸
(A.D. 1798 to 1866)



Matthew 13:45-46 (NASB), ⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,” ⁴⁶and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.



uke records the words of Jesus when He declared to us one of the keys to this parable, that it is He who has come to seek and save the lost.

Luke 19:9-10 (NASB), ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

In this parable it is God, Jesus, Holy Spirit who seeks the lost of this world, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:8-10). What this merchant seeks is described as “**FINE PEARLS.**”



In this parable the fine pearls that is being sought after is you and I. We are the ones who are lost and need to be found. As in the Parable of the Treasure, a man found a treasure in a field and for **his** joy went and sold all that he had to buy the field. This is what Jesus did

¹⁸ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>

for us? Jesus give all he had and laid down His life so that we might be saved, redeemed by His blood.

The Parable of the Treasure and The Parable of the Pearl both reveals the high cost to God of acquiring His treasure who are like great pearls of great price in His Kingdom. As the church of Philadelphia was commended by Jesus saying that He sets before them an open door that no man can shut.

Revelation 3:7-8 (NASB),⁷“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ⁸‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

Jesus declares to the church in Philadelphia that He knows their deeds, (their works) the desire of their hearts. He has put an **OPEN DOOR** before them which no one can close. The open door of ministry was given to a church whose very name means **Brotherly Love**. Their name describes the charity and brotherly fellowship which was this church.

The Philadelphia church age was marked the revivals of 1739 with George Whitefield followed by John Wesley, Charles G. Finney and D. L. Moody.

Then came the “Open Door” of evangelism which no man could shut. In 1793 William Carey sailed from India, where he found an “Open Door,” and since then the Lord opened the door to China, Japan, Korea, India, and Africa and beyond until there is not a country in the world where the missionary cannot go.

Revelation 3:10-12 (NASB),¹⁰“Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.¹¹ I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; ...”

Here we read of a covenant promise that Jesus made with the church of Philadelphia and as such with every other believer who has kept His word as they did. “I WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TESTING WHICH SHALL COME UPON THE ENTIRE WORLD.” This hour of testing we call the Tribulation which begins in Revelation chapter six. Jesus told this church and those who continue on keeping His commandments and having faith ... You shall be delivered FROM this time of tribulation. This is one more proof that the church will be “caught out” of this world just prior to the beginning of the tribulation.



The Church at Laodicea

A Bit of History



Ruins at the city of Laodicea



Laodicea was an ancient city in Asia Minor (Turkey) that was founded by the Syrian king Antiochus II. It was situated on one of the major regional trade routes that made it a prosperous commercial and banking center of the time. The city used to be known as Diospolis (City of Zeus), but Antiochus II colonized it at the beginning of the Christian era and renamed the city after his wife Laodice. The city is located about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

The small city grew rapidly under Roman rule and became very wealthy. This is demonstrated by the fact an earthquake in A.D. 60 destroyed the city and the city refused imperial financial aid to rebuild. The chief export of the city was a seamless garment made of glossy black wool. The city was also known for its water system. An aqueduct was built from large, tightly fitted stones which channeled the water from mountain springs into the city.

Laodicea had an international population including Roman colonizers, the original Phrygians, Jews and immigrant Syrian settlers. The wealth of the Jewish population is demonstrated by Cicero who reported giving 20 pounds of gold as an annual contribution to Jerusalem in 62 B.C.

The Christians at Laodicea have long been used as an example of those whose faith became "lukewarm" because they put as much trust and faith in their financial wealth as they had in God. They sought temporary worldly wealth, while largely forsaking true eternal riches.

The Seventh Message to The Church at Laodicea

(Revelation 3:14-22)

The Lukewarm Church – A.D. 1866 to the Rapture

The church that is weak, lukewarm and complacent.

The Complaint: “I know your works, that you are neither hot nor cold: I would rather that you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, I am rich and increase in goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

The Counsel: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold that has been tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and clothed in white raiment, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.”

The Chastening: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The Promise: “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me. To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sit down with My Father in His throne. He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

A Closer Look at Laodicea

Christ has no “commendation” for this Church, but much to complain of. Revelation 3:16 “I know your works, that you art neither cold or hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.”

There is nothing more disgusting or nauseating than “tepid” water. So there is nothing more repugnant to Christ than a “**TEPID**” church. He would rather have a church “frozen” or “boiling.” It was the “chilly spiritual atmosphere” of the Church of England that drove John Wesley to start outside meetings, which became so noted for their “religious fervor.” It was the same “chilly atmosphere” of the Methodist Church that drove William Booth, in turn, to become a “Red-hot” Salvationist.

Our churches today are largely in this “**LUKEWARM**” condition. There is very little of warm-hearted spirituality. There is much going on in them, but it is largely mechanical and of a social character. Committees, societies, and clubs are multiplied, but there is an absence of “spiritual heat.” Revival meetings are held, but instead of waiting on the Lord for power, evangelists and paid singers are hired and soul winning is made a business. The cause of this “Luke warmness” is the same as that of the Church of Laodicea – Self Deception.

Revelation 3:17, “Because you say I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.”

They thought they were rich, and outwardly they were, but Christ saw the poverty of their hearts. There are many such churches in the world today. Many of these churches have cathedral-like buildings, stained glass windows, eloquent preachers, paid singers, large congregations. Some of them have large real estate and property interests and are well endowed, and yet they are poor. Many of the members, if not the majority, are worldly Christians. The poor and the saintly are not wanted in such churches because their presence is a rebuke. These churches do not see that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

If we were to visit such churches they would take pride in showing us the building, they would praise the preaching and singing, they would boast of the character of their congregations, the exclusiveness of their membership, and the attractiveness of all their

services. The Church at Laodicea was not burdened with debt, it was burdened with **WEALTH.**

The trouble with the church today is that it thinks that nothing can be done without money, and that if we only had the money the world would be converted in this generation. The world is not to be converted by money, but by the Spirit of God. The trouble with the Church of Laodicea was that its “gold” was not of the right kind, and so it was counseled to buy of the Lord “**gold tried in the fire.**” What kind of gold is that? It is gold that has no taint upon it. Gold that is not cankered, or secured by fraud or the withholding of a just wage.

What a description we have of these Laodicean days in James 5:1-4. The Church of Laodicea was not only poor, though rich. It was blind, or to put it more accurately, “Near-Sighted” as to heavenly things, so the Lord counseled them to anoint their eyes with “Eye-Salve.” Their merchants dealt in ointments and herbs of a high degree of healing virtue, but they possessed no salve that would restore impaired spiritual vision. Only the prompting of the Holy Spirit could do that.



But the Church was not only poor and blind, it was naked. Their outward garments were of the finest material and the latest fashionable cut, but not such as should adorn the person of a Child of God. So they were counseled to purchase of Christ “**White Raiment,**” in exchange for the “raven black woolen” garments for which the garment makers of Laodicea were famous. Then a most startling revelation was made to the Church of Laodicea. Christ said “**Behold, I stand at the Door and Knock.**”

These words are generally quoted as an appeal to sinners, but they were not. They are addressed to a Church, and to a Church in whose midst Christ had once stood. Now found Himself excluded and standing outside knocking for admittance. This is the most startling thing recorded in the New Testament, that it is possible for a church to be outwardly prosperous and yet have no Christ in its midst, and be unconscious of the fact. This is a description of a Christ-less church. Oh the **EXCLUDED CHRIST**, excluded from His own nation, for they rejected Him; excluded from the world, for it Crucified Him; excluded from His church for the sake of wealth, for He stands outside its door knocking to be let in.

How did Christ come to be outside the church? He had been within it once or there never would have been a church. How did He come to leave? It is clear that at some time they stopped trusting in Him, for they do not seem to have missed His presence. They continued to worship Him, to sing His praises, and engage in all manner of Christian service, yet He had withdrawn. Why? The reason is summed up in one word – **Worldliness.**

But how is Christ to get back into His church? Does it require the unanimous vote or invitation of the membership? No. *“If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”* The way to revive a lukewarm church is for the individual members to open their hearts and let Christ re-enter, and thus open the door for His reappearance.

The character of the church today is Laodicean, and as the Laodicean Period is to continue until the church of the “New Born” is taken out, we cannot hope for any great change until the Lord comes back. What do these “messages to the churches” teach us? They clearly teach the **DECLINE OF THE CHURCH**. That the professing church, instead of increasing in spiritual and world-converting power, will become lukewarm, faithless, and **CHRISTLESS**.

As the Laodicean Period closes the “Church Age,” the church disappears at the end of chapter three, and Israel comes again into view.

The Parable of the net



(The dragnet)

The Church at Laodicea and its corresponding Church Age¹⁹

(A.D. 1866 to the Rapture)

Matthew 13:47-50 (NASB), ⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; ⁴⁸and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”



¹⁹ <http://dailyfood.ca/kingdom/kingdom6wed.html>



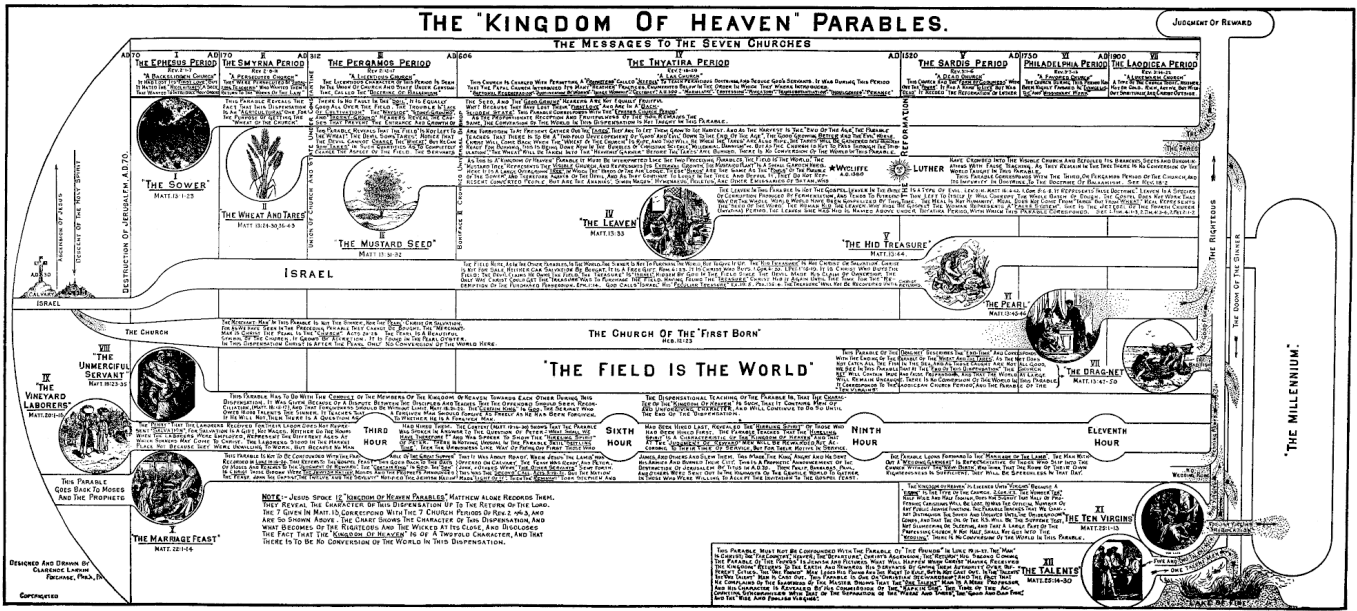
esus had much to say to this end-times church, and to the last church age before His coming. There is no message to the church of the seven year tribulation period because the church isn't here, it will be in heaven. Jesus warned the church that they are neither hot nor cold and that he would spew them out of His mouth. A lukewarm church is a worldly church and therefore there needs to be a separating out of the true believers from those who are Christian in name only or those who never knew the Lord (the bad fish).

The Parable of the Net has many similarities to the Parable of the Weeds. Both Parables were told to address the presence of wicked people in among God's people. The Wheat in one parable is identical to the Good fish in the other parable and the Weeds in the first parable are identical to the Bad Fish in the second. God wants us to leave it up to Him and His angels to weed out everything that causes evil. God will sort out the Good Fish from the Bad Fish or the Wheat from the Tares at the end of the age.

Bad Fish or Tares will be thrown into the fire. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, so how then can God say that there are Good Fish and Bad Fish; Wheat or Tares? The Good Fish (Wheat) are those that love what is right and bare good fruit. Bad Fish (Tares) are those that love evil and bare bad fruit. Then there are the imitators, the truly lukewarm. They are the ones who are Christian in name only, but their hearts are far from Him. They are then the "Tares," and the "Bad Fish," spoken about in the previous parables.

Overview of the Churches

The 7 Churches of Revelation ²⁰ and The 7 Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13



he letters to 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are generally recognized to be symbolic of the chronological history of the Christian church from the time of the apostles to the Rapture of the Church. This study outline proposes that the kingdom parables of Matthew 13 are also chronological in sequence, and are directly related to the 7 churches in Revelation, giving us further insight. Note that when a symbol is defined in a parable, that definition applies consistently and universally to the other parables. It is also proposed that Paul's letters to churches likely apply to the 7 churches as well.

²⁰ <http://biblelight.net/Kingdom-parables.htm>