



The Seven Churches of the Revelation

“I know...”

Revelation 2 and 3



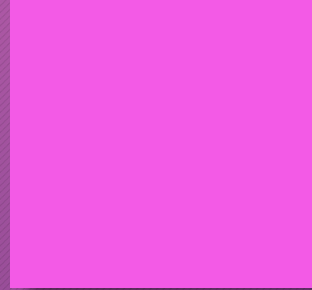
The church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.

Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder
we see her sore oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder,
by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping;
their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation
of peace forevermore;
till, with the vision glorious,
her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious
shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.



And is it so! I shall be like Thy Son?
Is this the grace which He for me has won?
Father of glory—thought beyond all thought!
In glory, to His own blest likeness brought!

Oh, Jesus, Lord, who loved me like to Thee?
Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see
Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,
Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul.

Yet it must be: Thy love had not its rest
Were Thy redeemed not with Thee fully blest;
That love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs.

Nor I alone; Thy loved ones, all complete
In glory, round Thee there with joy shall meet
All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,
Object supreme of all, by all adored.



The Seven Churches of the Revelation

“I know...”

Revelation 2 and 3



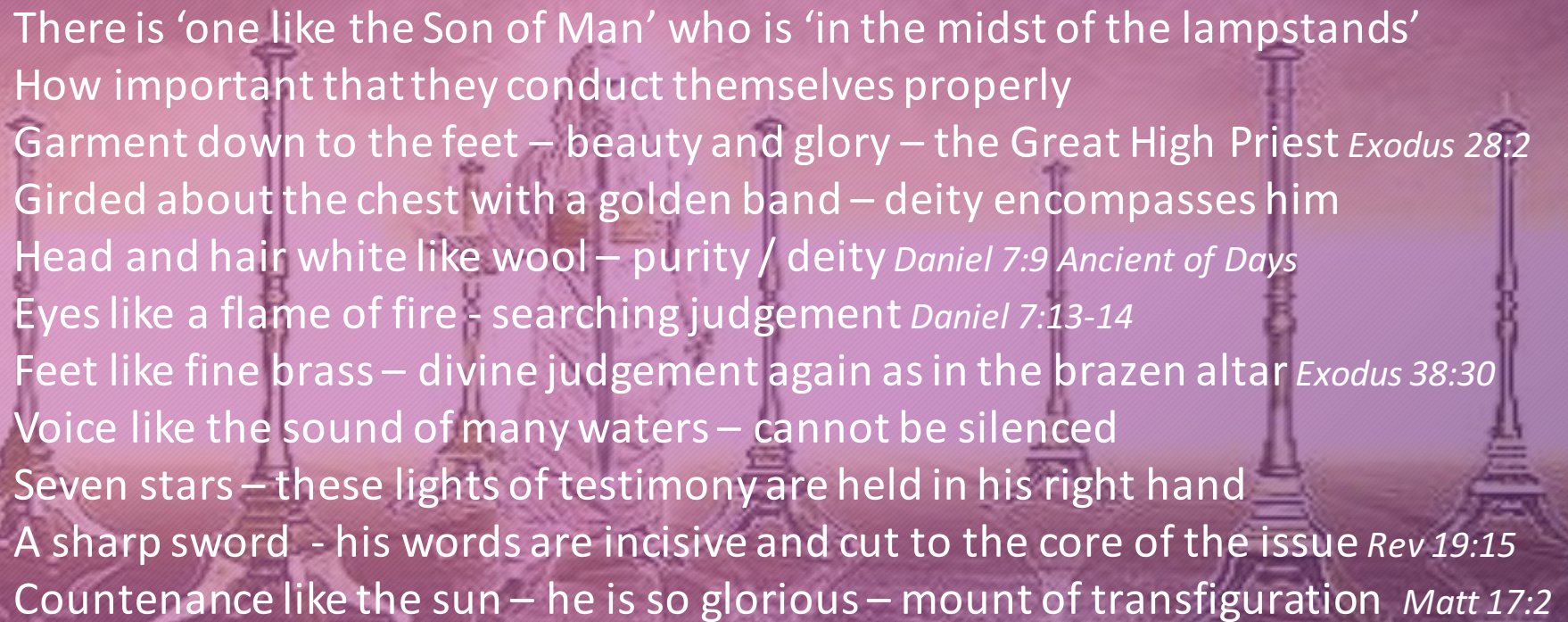
Companies of believers in a locality, called out to the name of the Lord Jesus – ‘ecclesia...a select and gathered out company, having certain qualifications and committed to certain work’ *Campbell Morgan*

They each had their own letter – each responsible ‘Lampstands’ rather than ‘candlesticks’ - each stood in its own right and shone in the darkness

They are gold - they bear the characteristics of deity

The seven churches *Revelation 1*





There is 'one like the Son of Man' who is 'in the midst of the lampstands'
How important that they conduct themselves properly
Garment down to the feet – beauty and glory – the Great High Priest *Exodus 28:2*
Girded about the chest with a golden band – deity encompasses him
Head and hair white like wool – purity / deity *Daniel 7:9 Ancient of Days*
Eyes like a flame of fire - searching judgement *Daniel 7:13-14*
Feet like fine brass – divine judgement again as in the brazen altar *Exodus 38:30*
Voice like the sound of many waters – cannot be silenced
Seven stars – these lights of testimony are held in his right hand
A sharp sword - his words are incisive and cut to the core of the issue *Rev 19:15*
Countenance like the sun – he is so glorious – mount of transfiguration *Matt 17:2*

The sender

Each letter is 'signed' by the Lord Jesus - he uses a different signature each time, taking us back to the vision of his glory in chapter 1



Do not be afraid

I am the First and the Last

I am he who lives and
was dead, and behold I
am alive for evermore

I have the keys of
Hades and of Death

The sender

John can only fall down as dead before such a man - if only these churches were prepared to do the same, they would discover one who was able to meet their every need

The recipients



- ‘The angel of the church of...’ Who is this angel? Opinions differ...
- ‘angel’ should be ‘messenger’. The person who carried the message from John on Patmos to the church.
 - Chapter 1:20 suggests that the letters were addressed to the guiding element of the churches. Maybe these are elders in view.
 - Mr. Allen suggests that: “There is a line of teaching in scripture that shows a correspondence between heavenly things and their earthly counterparts (see Heb.8:2,5; 9:23-24) ... it would seem that the word ‘angel’ is used representatively ... Thus if the lampstands represent literal physical congregations viewed against an earth background, then the stars must represent the same company but in their moral and spiritual condition against a heavenly background.”
 - The letter is delivered to the members of the churches

The overcomer



In every letter there is reference to 'he who overcomes' – the 'victorious one' (JB Phillips).

It is not that a believer can be lost. Nor is it a Christian of particular high standing.

EW Rogers (The Revelation and Future Events) says:

'The overcomer does not denote a specially pious kind of Christian but every genuine believer. It is a question of what is genuine. It is a mistake to suppose that everyone associated with the early or modern churches is real. The genuineness of one's profession is proved by his continuance; see Col.1:23; Heb.3:6. A believer may, like Gad, be overcome but he overcomes at last. It is not the reverses but the finally victory that counts. Only two classes are found in Rev.21:7-8; all are in one class or the other.'

Genesis 49:19 "Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him, but he shall triumph at last."

Lessons – past

The things which you have seen 1:19



The history of Israel

These churches will show us the unfolding of the history of the people of Israel – beginning with Adam and right through to Malachi they provide us with an allegory of the dealings of the nation with God.

Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
<p>‘You have fallen’ Adam - the Fall</p> <p>Tree of life in the Paradise of God Remove your lampstand from its place First love for God lost</p>	<p>‘Tribulation’ Israel in Egypt</p> <p>Suffering and persecution In the grip of a heathen nation 10 days, 10 plagues More failure</p>	<p>‘Doctrine of Balaam’ Israel in the wilderness</p> <p>Balaam, Balak, the hidden manna They murmured in the wilderness</p>	<p>‘That woman Jezebel’ The days of the Kings</p> <p>The people in the land Ahab, Jezebel, immorality, idolatry They sinned in the land</p>	<p>‘You live and are dead’ Israel taken into captivity</p> <p>For 70 years - there was little for God A few faithful List of names when they return Ezra 1</p>	<p>‘An open door’ The return from captivity</p> <p>From Babylon to Jerusalem God brought them back and raised up great men - Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai etc. Key - Isa 22:22</p>	<p>‘You are lukewarm’ The days of Malachi</p> <p>Despite the wonderful recovery from Babylon, within 100 years, Malachi is written</p>

Lessons – present

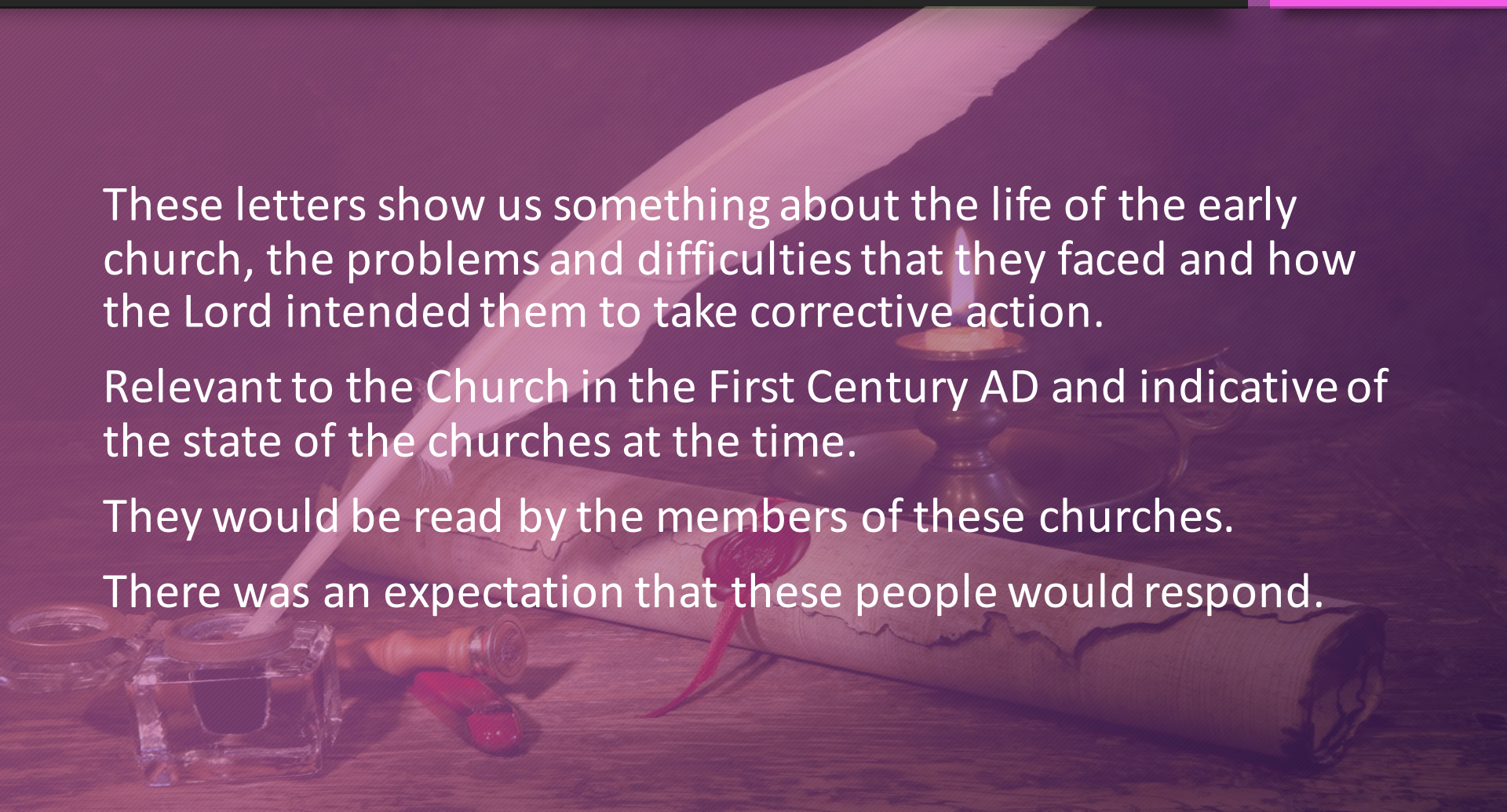
The things which are 1:19

These letters show us something about the life of the early church, the problems and difficulties that they faced and how the Lord intended them to take corrective action.

Relevant to the Church in the First Century AD and indicative of the state of the churches at the time.

They would be read by the members of these churches.

There was an expectation that these people would respond.



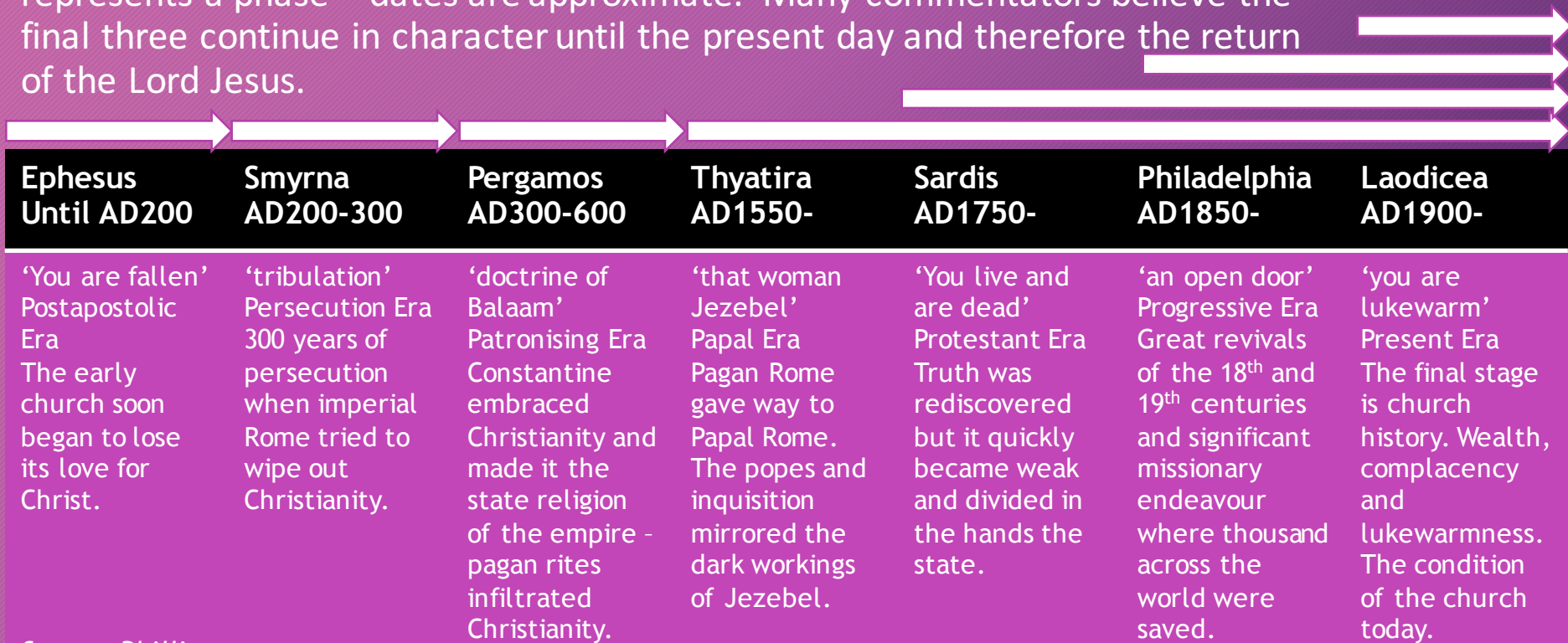
Lessons – future

The things which will take place after this 1:19



The history of the Church

We can apply these churches to the broad phases of the Church since Pentecost so they are prophetic. It is fascinating to see the parallels here. Each one represents a phase – dates are approximate. Many commentators believe the final three continue in character until the present day and therefore the return of the Lord Jesus.

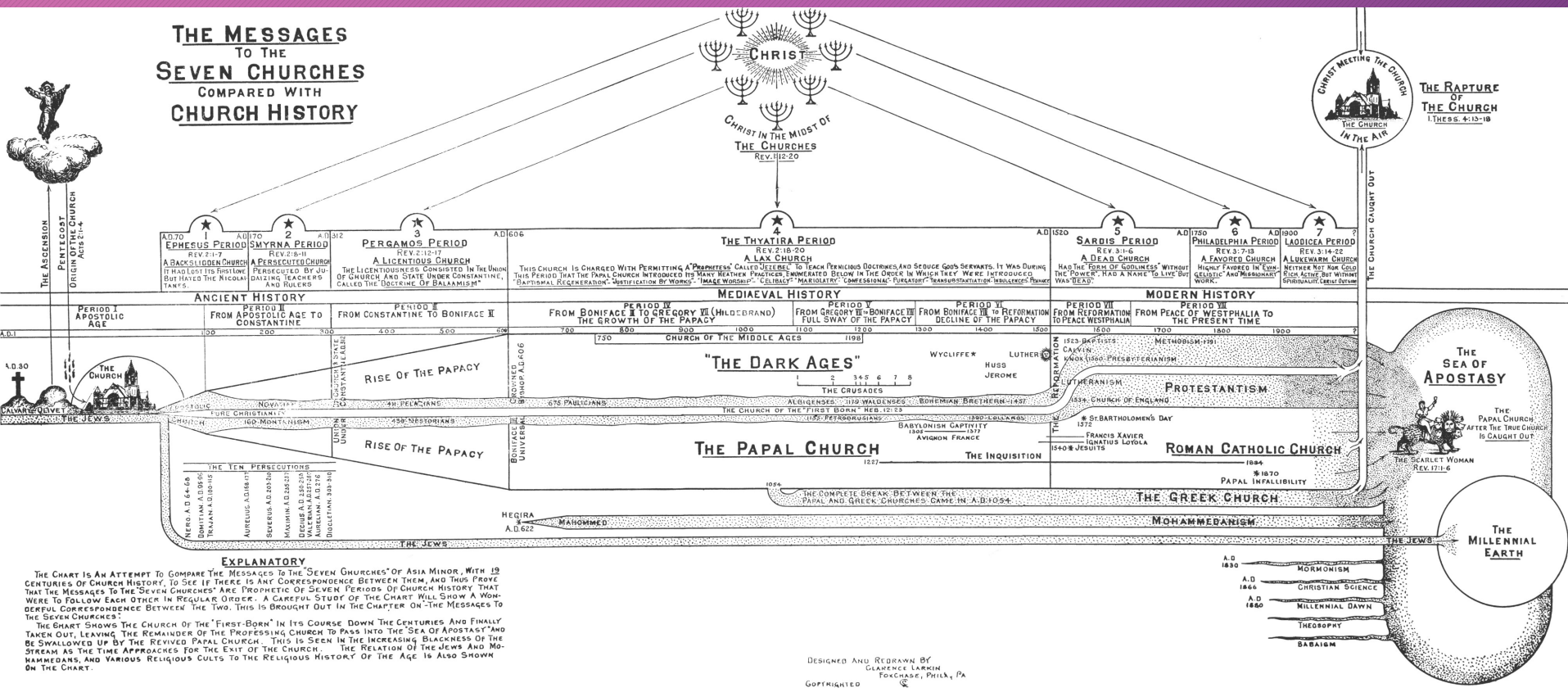



Source: Phillips

A graphic representation for help

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/assets/images/study/larkin/dispensationalTruth/c70.jpg>

Always proceed with caution!





There are vital lessons to be learned for every local church
We must recognise and celebrate the positives
We must recognise where error exists and take corrective action.
The challenge: 'He who has an ear, let him hear'.
So, what is there for us to learn from their example? If we visit
each of these churches today, we will find only ruins.
How can we guard against that being the case for us?

Lessons - practical

Look for common themes

Background

What can we learn about their cultural and spiritual background?

Things that are right

What are they commended for?

Things that are wrong

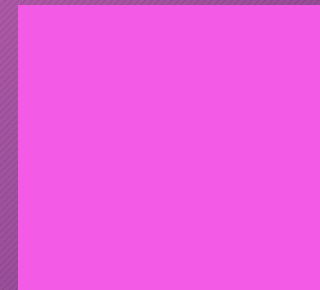
What are they reprimanded for?

Putting things right

What do they need to do now?

Reward

What promises are made to the overcomer?



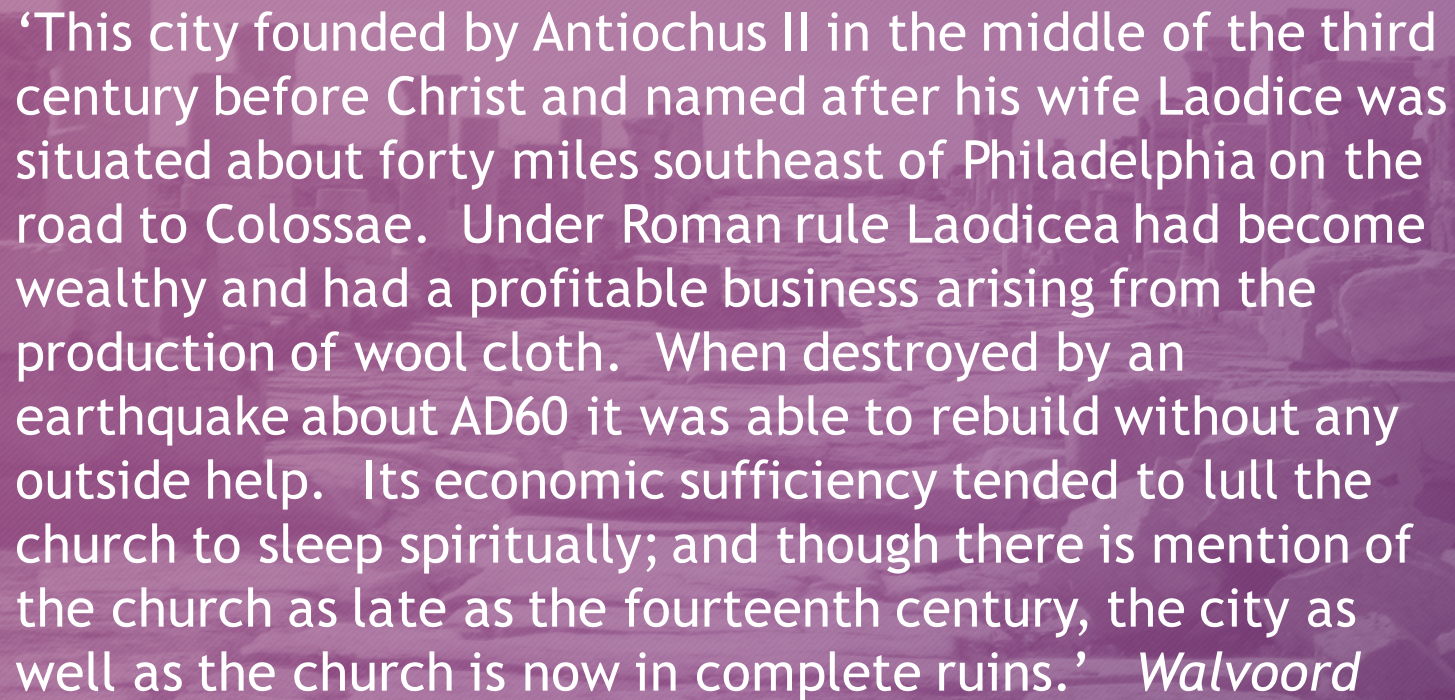
	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
Commendation	Rejects evil Perseveres Patience	Bears suffering with grace	Keep the faith of Christ	Love, service, faith, patience	Some have kept the faith	Perseveres in the faith, keeps the word of Christ	None
Criticism	Love for Christ no longer fervent	None	Tolerates immorality, idolatry and heresies	Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality	A dead church	None	Indifferent
Correction	Do the works you did at the first	Be faithful until death	Repent	Judgement coming; keep the faith	Repent; strengthen what remains	Keep the faith	Be zealous and repent
Crown	The tree of life	The crown of life	Hidden manna and a stone with a new name	Rule over nations and receive morning star	Faithful honoured and clothed in white	A place in God's presence, a new name and the New Jerusalem	Share Christ's throne

For example...

Laodicea – you are lukewarm

Revelation 3:14-22



The background of the slide features a photograph of ancient ruins, likely the city of Laodicea, with a semi-transparent purple overlay. The ruins include stone walls, a prominent column on the right, and various stone blocks scattered across the ground.

‘This city founded by Antiochus II in the middle of the third century before Christ and named after his wife Laodice was situated about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia on the road to Colossae. Under Roman rule Laodicea had become wealthy and had a profitable business arising from the production of wool cloth. When destroyed by an earthquake about AD60 it was able to rebuild without any outside help. Its economic sufficiency tended to lull the church to sleep spiritually; and though there is mention of the church as late as the fourteenth century, the city as well as the church is now in complete ruins.’ *Walvoord*

Laodicea - you are lukewarm

Background - cultural



42 miles south of Ephesus

10 miles west of Colossae

Strategically placed – good road

A prosperous city

Fine wool – from a particular breed of black sheep that gave a rich glossy wool suitable for clothing and carpet

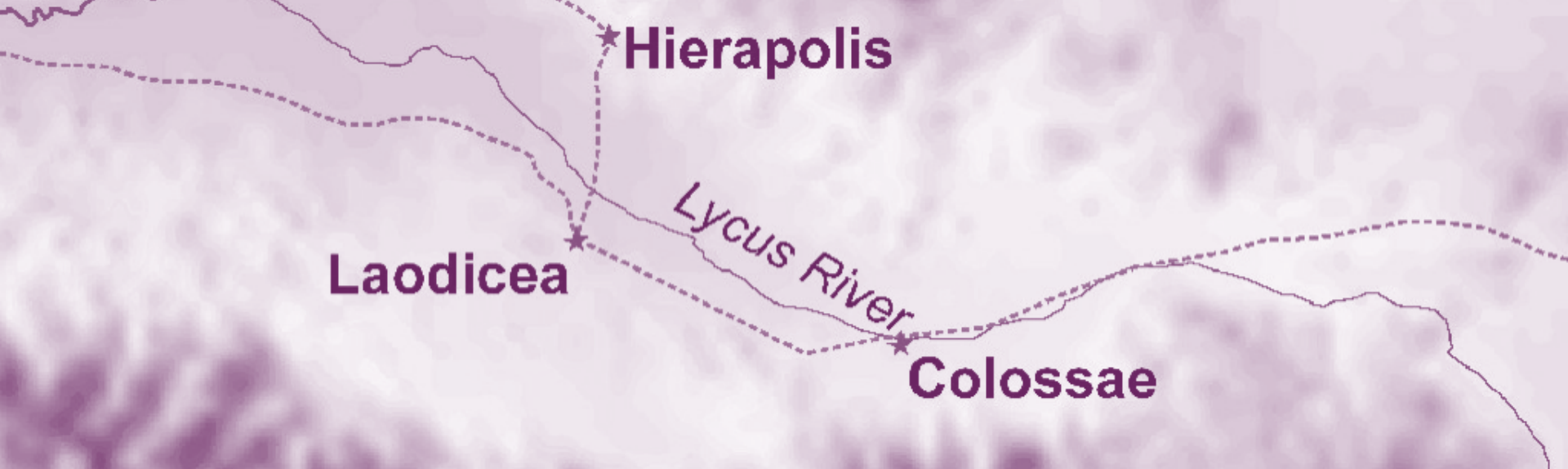
Banking centre

Ruined by earthquakes in AD17 and AD61 but refused any help to rebuild – proud and independent

Medical school in which eye-salve attracted sufferers from far and wide – the school was dedicated to the god of medicine

Received water that had been channelled from the hot springs in Hierapolis that was lukewarm by the time it reached them (it had no internal water supply of its own)

The name means ‘just people’ – right in their own eyes perhaps?



Background - spiritual

We do not know much - little archaeological evidence
Must have been heathen gods and a Jewish synagogue
Probably formed from Colossae and maybe through Epaphras
Referred to in Colossians 1:7 and 4:16 - instructed to read the
Colossian epistle - they may also have received one of their own

The Amen v14

God's final word. Approval and affirmation. None other beside him.

The Faithful and True Witness

They are being unfaithful but he is faithful and true. His words are utterly dependable. He is a witness – the word from which we get 'martyr' – he went to death; how far will they go for him?

The Beginning of the creation of God

He is the great Creator ('source' or 'originator'). He has made them. They are resting in their own strength and materialism is leading them to forget the 'Lord who made them' *Colossians 1:15-18*

The signature



Things that are right



None mentioned!

- Perhaps they were thinking of all that the Lord could commend them for.
- They were ignorant of their spiritual condition before the Lord.
- The words are more condemnatory than any of the others.
- In other cases the Lord has always found at least one thing that is praiseworthy.
- Perhaps the world outside and the other assemblies in the region would not even detect this concerning Laodicea, but the Lord again says: 'I know'.
- He is all-knowing and sees beyond the external – he knows the spiritual condition of the church.
- What about our local churches and our lives – is there anything to commend? Are we flattering ourselves before the God who sees and knows it all?

Things that are wrong



You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm v15,16

They were like the water that flowed into the city - undesirable. Hot water was useful for its healing qualities, cold water for refreshment but lukewarm is apparently good for nothing.

To be cold is to be devoid of spiritual life and have no interest in the things of Christ. To be hot is literally to be 'boiling' with the things of the Lord. To be lukewarm is to have embraced Christianity but to have wanted the things of the world as well and so be worthless as far as the Lord is concerned.

The Lord desires that they would be one or the other. If they were cold then he could gloriously save them. If they were boiling hot then he could use them. It has been well said that: 'Open rebellion is easier to deal with than apathy'.

And us? To what extent are we bubbling over for the Lord?

...otherwise

I will (am about to) vomit you out of my mouth v16

There is only one thing to do with lukewarm water – spit it out. We can drink hot tea, we can drink iced tea, but lukewarm tea is fit only for plants!

In what way would he vomit them out? Some say that the lack of existence of a testimony in Laodicea today would be testimony to the fact that it has already been done. Others think it refers to the coming again of Christ for the church – those who are not truly his will be left behind – vomited out!

Your nakedness may be revealed v18

The believers saw what they wanted; the world was perhaps confused with what it saw; but the Lord sees and knows it all and will expose the false professors – there is no fooling him.

Putting it right

Things that are wrong



You say you have need of nothing v17

How dangerous. This was a wealthy city and so probably were the members of the church. They had reached the point of material satisfaction - not what the Lord requires. They were spiritually destitute. *Luke 12:19-21*

So, not only were they lacking in zeal and fervour for the Lord, but they were also totally complacent.

The Christian should never reach such a state. We need to be endeavouring to be more like Christ and seeking to store up treasure in heaven. *Philippians 4:19*

Things that are wrong



You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked v17

The Lord leaves them in no doubt as to their condition. They are wretched (distressed and afflicted), miserable (to be pitied), poor (destitute and in need of assistance) and blind (no spiritual sight).

This is not how those who are in Christ should be - these attributes could be ascribed to unregenerate men – and there probably were some of these among the ‘church in Laodicea’.

We need the humility to accept and recognise our position before we serve the Lord effectively?

Buy from me gold refined in the fire, white garments and anoint your eyes v18

They could only buy from the Lord Jesus - his riches, spiritual garments and spiritual sight. So he 'counsels' or 'advises' them to buy from him. *Isaiah 55:1-2*

Gold speaks of deity and spiritual riches - they needed to learn more of God and to be totally refined and pure. *1 Corinthians 3:12*

Spiritually they were naked and should be ashamed. The Lord threatens to expose their nakedness. In Sardis it was defiled garments. Here it was no garments. They were so caught up in their worldly garments, that they had forgotten completely about spiritual garments. *James 5:1-3*

And for the city to which men came to receive sight, they themselves needed their eyes anointing. Perhaps they were guilty of the speck and the log syndrome *Matt 7:3*

Where are we seeking satisfaction?

Be zealous and repent v19

The Lord is chastening them because he loves them.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” *Hebrews 12:5 (from Proverbs 3:11,12)*

But if he is to not expose them, they are required to change their ways. The word ‘zeal’ here is very similar to the word ‘hot’ used previously - they were to be boiling over and fervent in his service all over again (NKJV margin - ‘eager’).

True repentance was needed.

Are we ready to stand apart from so many ‘Christians’ today? To get our hearts in the right place, to repent where that is required, such that we are truly zealous and fervent in the service of the Lord?

Open the door (v20)

A closed door - the Lord standing and knocking. This door seems to be to the heart of an individual believer.

In chapter 1 he was the one walking in the midst of the lampstands. So he is appealing to individuals within the church to open the door and let him come in.

They needed the Lord back in their lives. He will not break the door down, but he is still knocking.

Are we guilty of shutting the Lord out of our lives? Is he having to knock on the outside of our heart's door or is he right inside?

I will come in to him and dine with him v20

Fellowship – he enters into the life. This is the promise to all who truly give the Lord place in their lives. Two-way communication – ‘I with him and he with me’. We need to be sure we have this fellowship with the Lord.

It is an individual fellowship and communion with the Lord. It would seem to be the Lord’s Table from which we can eat at any time. This points us as to chapter 19 and the marriage supper of the Lamb. 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. *1 Corinthians 10:21*

The reward for the overcomer



I will grant to sit with me on my throne v21

In they would have power over the nations if they remained faithful to him. Now he shows the throne from which that power and authority will come. He is seated on his Father's throne, waiting to receive the kingdom. He is on his Father's throne and is thereby inextricably linked with him in his authority. When he receives his kingdom, we will be linked with him in his rule.

What a promise to those who sought after the riches, wealth and authority of the world. They would have authority, riches and wealth the like of which the world has never known, for all eternity. He overcame and now has such a position. How much there is in store for those who are faithful to him. *Rev 11:15*

The reward



I know ... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.



The seven churches



Enjoy the pictures from the past

Learn the lessons of the present

Anticipate the overcomer's reward in the future

Enjoy your study!

Appendix

Prophetic Foreshadowings in the Seven Churches

Jim Allen, Revelation, What the Bible Teaches, John Ritchie 1997

EPHESIAN 70-170AD THE POST APOSTOLIC CHURCH

By 70 all the apostles except John had sealed their testimony in blood. 169 is a generally accepted date for the martyrdom of Polycarp in Smyrna. Early devotion to Christ begins to fade

SMYRNIAN 170-312AD THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

These dates embrace the great general persecutions of the Roman Emperors. 312 is the date of the professed conversion of Constantine.

PERGAMENE 312-606AD THE PATRONISED CHURCH

312 and the conversion of Constantine marked the beginning of the period when to become a Christian was the popular thing and became the path to promotion and power within the Empire. 606 is the year when Boniface, Bishop of Rome was acknowledged “Universal Bishop” in fact the first Pope.

THYATIRAN 606-RAPTURE THE PAGAN CHURCH

The development of Roman Catholicism proceeded apace during the Dark Ages until it had become the institutionalised system which it is today. While shaken by the reformation it has continued virtually unchanged and will continue until the rapture. The removal of all believers at the rapture will leave Roman Catholic congregations virtually untouched so that the harlot features of “Mystery, Babylon the Great” will be developed (Chapter 17).

SARDIAN 1517-RAPTURE THE PROFESSING CHURCH

On 31st October 1517 Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 theses to the Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. This is generally accepted as a convenient date to mark the beginning of the Reformation. Denominationalism developing from the Reformation period will continue until the rapture of the church.

PHILADELPHIAN 1750-RAPTURE THE FEEBLE CHURCH

The evangelical preaching of John Wesley (1703-1791) and George Whitefield (1714 to 1770) was followed by the recovery of missionary zeal under William Carey (1761 to 1834) “the father of modern missions”, and the world-wide exercise about ecclesiastical truth that led to recovery of scriptural principles of gathering under J N Darby (1800 to 1882) and many others; all marked an evangelistic revival. In many parts of the world the fruit of this recovery will be felt until the rapture.

LAODICEAN 1900-RAPTURE THE LUKEWARM CHURCH

Many assemblies today would admit a lukewarm condition. The very existence of this in some assemblies is a witness that the rapture of the Church cannot be very distant. The widespread embrace of charismatic teaching has also led to a spiritual complacency that hides a poverty in many congregations which, in spiritual terms, is very similar to what existed in Laodicea. Churches of this kind often have large numbers, great profession and great activity but with little fidelity to either scripture or Christ. Some even boast that they “have need of nothing”.