**Letters from Our Lord (Revelation 2, 3)**

**By *Believers Bible Commentary***

In Revelation 2-3, we have individual letters addressed to the seven churches of Asia. The letters may be applied in at least three ways. **First** of all, they describe conditions that actually existed in the *seven local churches* at the time John was writing. **Secondly**, they give a view of Christendom on earth *at any one time* in its history. The features found in these letters have existed in part, at least, in every century since Pentecost. In this respect, the letters bear marked resemblances to the seven parables of Matthew 13. **Finally**, the letters give a *consecutive preview* of the history of Christendom, each church representing a distinct period. The general trend of conditions is downward. Many believe that the first three letters are consecutive and that the last four are concurrent, reaching to the time of the Rapture.

According to the third view, the epochs in the history of the church are generally listed as follows:

*Ephesus*: The church of the first century was generally praiseworthy but it had already left its first love.

*Smyrna*: From the first to the fourth century, the church suffered persecution under the Roman emperors.

*Pergamos*: During the fourth and fifth centuries, Christianity was recognized as an official religion through Constantine's patronage.

*Thyatira*: From the sixth to the fifteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church largely held sway in Western Christendom until rocked by the Reformation. In the East, the Orthodox Church ruled.

*Sardis*: The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Post-Reformation period. The light of the Reformation soon became dim.

*Philadelphia*: During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were mighty revivals and great missionary movements.

*Laodicea*: The church of the last days is pictured as lukewarm and apostate. It is the church of liberalism and ecumenism.

Each church has its own distinctive character. Phillips has assigned the following titles, expressing these dominant features:

*Ephesus*, the loveless church;

*Smyrna*, the persecuted church;

*Pergamos*, the over-tolerant church;

*Thyatira*, the compromising church;

*Sardis*, the sleeping church;

*Philadelphia*, the church with opportunity; and

*Laodicea*, the complacent church.

Walvoord describes their problems as:

(1) losing their first love;

(2) fear of suffering;

(3) doctrinal defection;

(4) moral departure;

(5) spiritual deadness;

(6) not holding fast; and

(7) lukewarmness.