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| **Letters From Our Lord (Revelation Chapters 2, 3) Commentary** |

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| **Commentator** | ***Ephesus*** | ***Smyrna*** | ***Pergamos*** | ***Thyatira*** | ***Sardis*** | ***Philadelphia*** | ***Laodicea*** |
| 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.  **(Believer's Bible Commentary)** | The church of the first century was generally praiseworthy but it had already left its first love. | From the first to the fourth century, the church suffered persecution under the Roman emperors. | During the fourth and fifth centuries, Christianity was recognized as an official religion through Constantine's patronage. | 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. | The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the Post-Reformation period. The light of the Reformation soon became dim. | During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were mighty revivals and great missionary movements. | 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: | the loveless church; | the persecuted church; | the over-tolerant church; | the compromising church; | the sleeping church; | the church with opportunity; | and the complacent church. |
| **Walvoord** describes their problems as | losing their first love; | fear of suffering; | doctrinal defection; | moral departure; | spiritual deadness; | not holding fast; and | lukewarmness. |
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| Notice that at the end of each letter, our Lord says, **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.”** With this admonishment, we are led to believe that the messages to all of the churches are but one continuous message to the individual who desires to rule and reign with Christ.  **(Gary Whipple's Shock and Surprise, Beyond the Rapture)** | Those of Ephesus lost their first love (the Word). Jesus says whosoever repents and returns to the Word will be an *overcomer* and will be given the special privilege of eating of the tree of life (this speaks of a much higher wisdom)  (Rev. 2:1-7). | Those of the Smyrna church were being tried with special trials and tribulations to test their faithfulness. Jesus says those who are faithful unto death will be given a “crown of life,” but those who fall away will be hurt of the *second death.* (Rev. 2:8-11) | Those of Pergamos teach and allow to be taught the *doctrine* of Balaam which says: *“because* you are the sons of God, you can do as you choose without punishment or loss of reward” (Num. 25:1-3; 31:16). Those who turn from this doctrine will be *overcomers* and will be given “hidden manna and a white stone” (special privileges to feed on the deep things of Christ along with a high award or rank in the kingdom).  (Rev. 2:12-17) | Those of Thyatira (dark ages of the Roman Catholic church historically) become overcomers by not partaking of this church’s sins and sinful teachings of spiritual idolatry and fornication.  They will rule over the nations with a rod of iron (possibly the third level in the kingdom structure), and be given the morning star (knowledge of the rapture).  (Rev. 2:18-29) | Those of Sardis are saved but that is all. However, those that will grow in the Word, hold fast, repent of sins, and watch for His coming will be *overcomers* and will have a white garment. Those that fail will be *non-overcomers* and be *blotted out of* the “book of life” (lose their right to enter the kingdom).  (Rev. 3:1-6) | Those of Philadelphia who overcome will be given the highest rank or privilege in the kingdom. They will become a pillar in the temple and have written on them the name of the city of God. At present, they are counted as already having crowns and are admonished to *hold fast* so that no one can take them.  (Rev. 3:7-13) | Those of Laodicea have become rich in the things of the world and are saying, “We **have need of nothing.”** Yet Jesus says that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, and as such are **“lukewarm”** (no power) and will be **“spewed out of His mouth”** (lose inheritance). However, anyone who *overcomes* will be allowed to sit with Him on His throne. (Rev.3: 14-22) |
| From the online site **"May He Increase"** | "The Light of Asia," the period just after Pentecost | The Persecuted Church | The Pagan Church | The Church of Romanism | The Protestant Church | The Revived Church | The Apostate Church |

Gary Whipple's further commentary:

The careful student of the Word will see in the first *four* letters, a composite picture of the beginning and ending state of an apostate Christian (one falling away from God). Then, in the *fifth* and *sixth* letters, he will see the growth of a newborn Christian to full maturity. Then in the *seventh,* a falling away of that Christian due to prosperity and the worship of mammon. The apostasy in the first-four letters begins by *leaving* the Word, whereas the apostasy of the seventh is the result of *prosperity* of this world.

Notice the three steps of apostasy in the first-four letters:

(1) The loss of their first love, the Word, which caused them to fall into special trials and tribulations for the purposes of bringing them back.

(2) A further fall into accepting a false doctrine, called the doctrine of Balaam (Num. 31:16).

(3) The final step in accepting the teaching of spiritual idolatry and fornication to such a degree, that the apostate does not want Christ to rule over him. Then notice that in the seventh letter, the cause for the first step in the fall (leaving the Word) is prosperity and power in this world.