

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

by William McCarrell

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AN OVERVIEW: INTRODUCTORY

PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE

Revelation contains seven letters from CHRIST to His Church, given sixty-six years after His return to Heaven. They constitute His last direct message to His Church. Surely, they should receive prayerful, careful, and continuous consideration upon that part CHRIST's Church. How seldom they are studied, taught, or even considered in the Church! Though addressed to local churches existing during the first century, they apply to any Christian or church in any place at any time. The Ephesus letter describes the Apostolic Church, the Smyrna letter the suffering church, the Pergamos letter the broadened or compromising church, the Thyatira letter the big church, the Sardis letter the dead church, the Philadelphia letter the Fundamental church, and the Laodicea letter the Modernist church.

These letters contain many nuggets for Bible doctrine, spiritual worship, devotional life, fruitful service, and practical Christian living. Study of them discovers much warning as to the source, progress and catastrophe of sin in individual or collective Christian life. CHRIST is neglected in the first letter. This sin, never properly corrected, deepens and increases until CHRIST is seen in the seventh letter: "**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 will sup with him, and he with me**" (Revelation 3:20) without the church collectively and dealing with the individual. What encouragement to individual overcomers is revealed in a study of that promised them in each letter!

These letters call for continuous self-examination, cleansing, and separation regarding everything contrary to GOD's will, as revealed in His Word. They offer continuous encouragement, comfort and edification to individuals and churches obedient to GOD's will as revealed in His Word. They set Christian responsibility, privilege, and obligation before individual believers. While fearless in a description of existing conditions and fascinating as to announcement of future program, they solemnly suggest that judgment should always begin and ever continue in the house of GOD till JESUS comes: "**For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of GOD: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of GOD?**" (I Peter 4:17) and "**For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged**" (I Corinthians 11:31). They are reasonable to the spiritually-enabled ear. They offer spiritual edification and assure reward to the obedient. They warn the spiritually

disobedient of chastening and judgment. How spiritually illuminating to list the characteristics mentioned which either please or displease CHRIST!

GENERAL PROPHETIC FOREVIEW

These seven letters are prophetic. Each Epistle contains an announcement of the future. While eliminating much detail as to conditions in the church addressed, sufficient description is given to enable a prophetic foreview. The churches addresses are not necessarily the outstanding churches of the first century, but churches with certain dominant characteristics, the description of which makes a prophetic picture of seven periods of collective earthly church history. While describing church conditions and characteristics as a whole in the first century, they also describe church conditions and characteristics in every period of church history. Each letter also describes dominant church conditions and characteristics of a particular period.

GOD had a purpose in choosing seven churches. The Bible, from Genesis one and two and throughout, reveals that GOD completes work in cycles of seven. This fact is also discovered in every realm of His work. Revelation, the Bible's consummation book, presents the number "7" at least forty-nine times. In these seven letters GOD gives a full description of the Church's earthly course and experience from its beginning at Pentecost to its rapture at CHRIST's coming (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Without attempting to rigidly or dogmatically limit CHRIST's work to time-grooves, saved ones can nevertheless profit by prophetic study of these letters. A master-key is evidenced by its ability to fit and open. Prophetic study of the seven letters of Revelation, two and three, provides a master-key for understanding the earthly course and experience of CHRIST's Church. This conviction is deepened by observing that GOD's SPIRIT, throughout the Bible, frequently precedes momentous turns in GOD's program with man by providing a prophetic foreview of the same.

The SPIRIT enlightened Abraham concerning His people's future sojourn in Egypt (Genesis 15). Through Moses, He foreshadowed Israel's experience in Canaan (Deuteronomy 29-31). When Israel rejected GOD's theocracy and chose human kings, GOD foredescribed their bitter future experience with kings through Samuel (I Samuel 8). When GOD transferred civil governmental power from Jews to Gentiles, His SPIRIT foreviewed Gentile earthly dominion through Daniel (Daniel 2). Preceding His rejection, CHRIST presented a panoramic view of earthly happenings between His crucifixion and return to earth (Matthew 24). The SPIRIT foredescribed the experience of CHRIST's Church when the momentous dispensational transition from Israel to the Church (Law to Grace) occurred (Revelation 2 and 3).

PARTICULAR PROPHETIC FORESHADOWING

The Ephesus letter foreshadows the spiritually powerful Apostolic Church of the first century; the Smyrna letter, the Church's martyr period during the second and third centuries; the Pergamos letter, the corruption of Christian testimony through uniting church and state under Constantine and thus enabling the launching of Roman Catholicism, during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries; the Thyatira letter, the development of the papacy and strangle-hold of Roman Catholicism, historically designated "*The Dark Ages*" and covering from the sixth century on; while the Sardis letter foredescribes the rise, development and corruption of Protestantism, which began in the fifteenth century and continues until CHRIST returns to earth. Many Bible

students are convinced that the Philadelphian and Laodicean letters picture simultaneous church conditions preceding the Church's rapture, -- Philadelphia illustrating that which bears CHRIST's name and is false. That pictured by Philadelphia and Laodicea can be easily discerned in every denomination, community, and local church.

Each of the last four letters significantly suggests CHRIST's second coming: "**Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. . . . But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. . . . And I will give him the morning star**" (Revelation 2:22, 25, 28) and "**Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. . . . Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. . . . So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. . . . To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne**" (Revelation 3:3, 10-11, 16, 21)

This assures that corrupt Roman Catholicism, spiritually dead Protestantism, genuine Fundamental Christianity and apostate Modernism will continue simultaneously until the Church's rapture.

GENERAL STRUCTURE

Each letter contains a description of the Speaker which harmonizes with part of the description of the resurrected, glorified CHRIST in chapter one of Revelation.

Each Epistle contains.

- I. A command to write.
- II. A significant church name.
- III. A description of the Speaker.
- IV. A acknowledgement of works.
- V. An exhortation to overcome.
- VI. A promised reward to overcomers.
- VII. An appeal to hear.

PROPHETIC IMPORTANCE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

About one-third of the Bible is prophecy. Prophecy offers convincing evidence of Bible inspiration. As all of the Bible's truth and message stands or falls with its inspiration, Satan ever opposes prophetic Scripture. Satan uses some to hinderingly belittle prophetic truth by claiming it is visionary and not spiritually practical. Prophetic truth is never properly apprehended unless productive of practical Christian living.

The seven letters in chapters two and three of Revelation prophetically describe seven periods of earthly church experience. A prophetic study of them offers abundant help to individual

believers, Christian servants, and churches, for spiritual life and service. Such study will spiritually safeguard Christians and churches by revealing the subtle course of Satan's opposition to CHRIST, His children and His cause. It exposes Satan's wily steps in leading the church collectively from loyalty to the Christian faith and fruitful spiritual service into denial of the Christian faith and activities pleasing to Satan.

Satan is a master whittler. Gradual whittling is an effective method which Satan often follows in robbing mighty servants and works of spiritual effectiveness. Catastrophes of Biblical error, denial of faith, and sin, are ever preceded by Satan's definite, gradual, preparatory whittling process.

Each spiritual weakness or sin yielded to or tolerated prepares for a further departure from GOD's will, Word, and way.

This little study was written in 1936 by William McCarrell. It, of course, is uncoprighted and long out-of-print - and the LORD has seen fit to make it possible to preserve it within the pages of our website.

A SATANIC WHITTLING COURSE

The Ephesus letter describes how Satan gained his first foothold in the work of drawing the church collectively from CHRIST into apostasy.

EPHESUS: THE APOSTOLIC (POWERFUL) CHURCH

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:1-7)

Failing to hinder GOD's children in service, to lead them into denial of faith, or even into indifferentism toward Bible truth, he succeeded in causing them to be occupied with service for CHRIST rather than the person of CHRIST. This dulled the keen edge of their joyful first-love experience with CHRIST. It constituted an entering wedge in the church's downward course toward apostasy.

The Smyrna letter describes a period of terrific suffering, severe persecution, death, and martyrdom which GOD permitted Satan to hurl at GOD's children.

SMYRNA - THE SUFFERING CHURCH

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Revelation 2:8-11)

GOD's permitting this experience was partially necessitated by spiritual let-down during the Ephesus period referred to by CHRIST in the words, "thou hast left thy first love" (Revelation 2:4). GOD permitted chastening then, as He permits it now, for the purpose of working spiritual cleansing and correction in and through saved ones. This spiritual cleansing and correction checks progress in error, sin, and spiritual defeat. Thus it often eliminates necessity for further suffering. The church, though standing true during the Smyrna period, which covered centuries of suffering, did not return collectively to its experience of first love with CHRIST.

The third downward step of GOD's church is described through the letter to the Pergamos Church.

PERGAMOS - THE COMPROMISED CHURCH

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:12-17)

Satan led into compromise with error, mixture with worldliness, and an unholy alliance with the State. A broad church resulted. Error, worldliness, and sin increased. Spiritual convictions and standards began to weaken. This spiritual whittling was Satan's preparation for greater spiritual declension.

The fourth step in Satan's downward course in GOD's Church is pictured in the letter to the church at Thyatira.

THYATIRA - THE CHURCH SETTLED IN SIN

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God,

who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and 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 none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelation 2:18-29)

Previous failure to correct Biblical error and cleanse sin prepared the way for a period in church history pictured by the Thyatira letter. Here we see a church wilfully setting aside GOD's Word, supplanting GOD's Son, and tolerating sin. It becomes corrupted and cursed with sinful practices, even the depths of Satan (Revelation 2:24). By wilfully resisting the light of GOD's Word and stubbornly retaining sin, it so weakens spiritually that even future mighty God-given revivals are not sufficient to bring back to the church the spiritual life and service CHRIST desires for it.

The letter to the Sardis Church reveals GOD's merciful attempt to bring the church as a whole back to His Word, His will, His way, and His Son.

SARDIS - THE DEAD CHURCH

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 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 thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:1-6)

This letter also reveals that previous sin had so spiritually weakened those addressed that GOD's offer, plea, and work, though producing the Protestant Reformation, did not entirely check Satan's downward course within the professing church. GOD finally writes over Protestantism, which is pictured by the Sardis letter, the condemnation, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and are (spiritually) dead" (Revelation 3:1).

The Philadelphia letter pictures GOD's gracious rallying of CHRIST's genuine spiritual church in days preceding CHRIST's Second Coming.

PHILADELPHIA - THE FUNDAMENTAL CHURCH

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more 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 cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:7-13)

However, previous yieldedness to Satan's desires upon the part of the church as a whole, and failure to yield to GOD's Word, will, way, and Son, make it possible for Satan to hinder the work of GOD's true last-days church. This hindrance functions very strongly through imitation of spiritual things. It is referred to be GOD as "**the synagogue of Satan**" (Revelation 3:9). Satan's hindering work is also exercised through the world-wide leavening and deadening influence of the apostate church. Satan is able to effectively hinder, despite faithful testimony, world-wide proclamation of Bible truth, gracious contending for the Faith, and consistent spiritual living as pictured in the letter to the Philadelphia Church. His power in hindering seems the more remarkable because of marvelous last-day fulfillment of Scripture prophecy. Such Satanic hindrance would be impossible had but the way been prepared by previous whittling of Christian faith and living.

As the church age closes, we find Satan's deadly apostate work pictured by the letter to the Laodicean Church (Revelation 3:14-22).

LAODICEA - THE CHURCH CHRIST SPEWS OUT

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with

eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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 will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22)

In the period pictured by the Laodicean Church, CHRIST's salvation, edification, and spiritual enrichment are unappreciated. CHRIST is not desired as SAVIOUR and LORD. Such conditions force a picture of CHRIST standing without the professing church system and dealing with the individual (Revelation 3:20).

SEVEN STEPS IN APOSTASY

Apostasy constitutes wilful turning from CHRIST and GOD's light to error, worldliness, self, and sin.

The first step was a turning from CHRIST, GOD's best, to second best - to good things during the Ephesus period.

The second step was evidenced by failure to return to occupancy with CHRIST's Person. This failure occurred despite the steadfastness in testimony to truth, the spiritual service, and the victorious suffering which characterized the Smyrna period.

The third step is seen in the Pergamos period. Those bearing CHRIST's name turned from GOD's Word, will, way, and worship to man's word, will, way and worship, in forming worldly alliance forbidden by GOD.

The fourth step in apostasy is evidenced by corrupt religious practices and sin being substituted for GOD's Word, GOD's work, and GOD's Son during the Thyatira period.

The fifth outstanding step in apostasy is manifested by prevalence of mere religious formalism and such spiritual deadness as effectively hinders spiritual response to GOD, during the Sardis period.

The sixth step in apostasy's course occurs during the Philadelphia period. Apostasy causes cleavage and a life and death struggle between that which is true to CHRIST, GOD's Word, Christian faith and that which denies GOD's Word, the fundamentals of Christian faith and CHRIST's Person.

The seventh and ultimate result of apostasy is seen in the Laodicean period. Everything dishonoring to CHRIST is neglected or rejected, while that which dishonors CHRIST is accepted and proudly gloried in. As the essence of apostasy is the wilful and stubborn rejection of GOD's will as revealed in His Word, GOD's only means of dealing with apostasy is judgment.

Chapter two and three of Revelation reveal a resurrected, all-sufficient, glorified CHRIST. Living amidst saved ones (Revelation 1:13, 20), He notices and is deeply interested in their

spiritual fruitfulness or fruitlessness, also defeat or victory. Seven times He states, "**I know thy works.**" These Scriptures present CHRIST as the One upon Whom a saved one rises or falls regarding service. He is the center, the objective, and the energy of all GOD-honoring service. As the Faithful Witness, He lives to direct Christian service (Revelation 3:14). This direction is imparted by the HOLY SPIRIT through GOD's Word. Thus as the Bible determines obedience or disobedience in service, it also determines fruitfulness or fruitlessness for CHRIST. It is essential that one be saved through GOD's Word in order to serve: "**Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever**" (I Peter 1:23); that he be cleansed through the Word to be fruitful: "**Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth**" (John 17:17); that he obey GOD's Word in order to render pleasing service: "**Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. . . . Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path**" (Psalm 119:11, 105).

As the "**first begotten of the dead**" (Revelation 1:5), CHRIST is the divine energy for service. His sufficient grace strengthens for every test involved. He is sufficient for victory despite any circumstance or condition, even supernatural hindrance.

His indwelling, omnipotent, miraculous life enables saved ones to overcome every Satanic temptation.

It safeguards them from being drawn from their first-love experience in CHRIST.

It is the secret of triumph over every Satanic assault, including suffering unto death.

It is the energy for a life of separation from every compromise with worldliness, sin and self.

It enables such living as rebukes religious corruption and disobedience to GOD's Word.

It safeguards from mere ritualism and dead religiousness.

It enables such loyalty to GOD's Word and CHRIST as produces a life of spiritual fragrance, freshness and fruitfulness.

It is the secret of a life that magnifies and honors CHRIST through living above and apart from all that dishonors CHRIST.

CHRIST, THE JUDGE OF SERVICE

CHRIST, the future RULER of the kings of the earth, judges all service. He rebukes everything contrary to GOD's Will. He continually warns about the indifference, worldliness, and sin that rob of desire for service and fruitage in the same. He warns that GOD-pleasing service is conditioned upon such separation unto CHRIST as separates from all that displeases GOD. He warns that failure to meet conditions for fruitful life and service results in removal of testimony (2:5), -- causes His direct opposition (2:16), -- results in tribulation and suffering (2:22-23), -- will be rebuked at His Second Coming (Revelation 3:3), -- will be exposed and miss heavenly enrichment (3:9-12); -- also that much of it is associated with that which will be rejected and judged by CHRIST at His Second Coming (3:16).

Desiring to safeguard from suffering on earth and loss when JESUS comes, He encourages continuous self-cleansing and judgment. In harmony with CHRIST's desire, GOD's Word teaches believers that judgment should begin at the house of GOD (I Peter 4:17), and that believers should be purged from everything dishonoring to CHRIST in the church: "**But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work**" (I Timothy 2:20-21). It comfortingly assures that self-judgment through GOD's Word produces spiritual growth and fruit, and also prevents the necessity of GOD's chastening work: "**For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world**" (I Corinthians 11:31-32).

CHRIST'S REWARDING SERVICE

CHRIST encourages GOD-pleasing service by assuring of God-given rewards. Seven times in Revelation two and three in promising reward He says, "**to him that overcometh.**"

Those victoriously maintaining fellowship with CHRIST, despite Satanic temptation, experience His abundant life (Revelation 2:7). This reward imparts the joy which Satan has robbed man of since Eden, by leading him out of fellowship with GOD.

CHRIST crowns with life those who victoriously suffer for Him, especially unto death (2:10). Thus He proclaims defeat of Satanic attempts to hinder CHRIST's cause through martyrdom from days of Abel till CHRIST's return.

Those overcoming temptation to compromise with worldliness and sin are rewarded by divine acknowledgment, a new name, and experience of CHRIST's hidden manna life (2:17). Thus He demonstrates the sufficiency of Himself for believers during this world's wilderness pilgrimage.

Overcomers of corrupt religion and Bible disobedience are rewarded with favor at CHRIST's coming, and a share in His triumphant reign (2:26-27). Thus He defeats Satan's persistent efforts, illustrated by his often leading Israel astray, to rob man of the privilege and glory of reigning with GOD.

Those overcoming religious deadness through spiritual relationship and fellowship with CHRIST are kept for fellowship with CHRIST and display in glory (3:4-5). Thus Satan's supernatural attempts to prevent such fellowship will be rebuked.

Those who stand true to GOD's Son and Book through testimony and consistent life before men will be rewarded with enriching, intimate, eternal identity and fellowship with GOD and CHRIST in glory (3:11-12). Thus Satan's attempt to impoverish spiritually will be defeated.

Those who overcome temptation to live for that which dishonors CHRIST and who live for that which honors CHRIST will be rewarded by being identified with His throne (3:21). Thus Satan's endeavor to keep certain souls from glorification will fail.

GLORY TO GLORY

While the seven letters reveal progressiveness in sin, apostasy, and the loss involved, they also reveal progressiveness in rewards. The overcomer in CHRIST partakes of CHRIST's divine (heavenly) life (2:7); -- CHRIST's eternal life (2:11); -- CHRIST's hidden life (2:17); -- CHRIST's victorious (reigning) life (2:26-27); -- CHRIST's favored (righteous) life (3:5); -- CHRIST's enriching fullness of life (3:12); -- CHRIST's glorified life (3:21). The overcomer's pathway is from glory to glory.

OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

How seldom these seven letters from the glorified CHRIST to His redeemed people and church are studied by them. How seldom declared from pulpits! What spiritual loss or gain is involved in heeding their message! What need exists for their message in present-day church life! What spiritual edification is involved in the individual believers or the church as a whole obeying their messages! How necessary that every saved one, also every Christian church, discern that which the living, glorified CHRIST commends or condemns in each letter!

CHRIST COMMENDS

01. Spiritual works (2:2)
02. Spiritual labor (2:2)
03. Repulsiveness to error (2:2)
04. Spiritual patience (2:3)
05. Steadfastness in truth (2:3)
06. Hatred of Nicolaitanism (man supplanting GOD) (2:6)
07. Material poverty for CHRIST (2:9)
08. Suffering for CHRIST (2:10)
09. Enduring Satanic assault (2:10)
10. Persecution for CHRIST (2:10)
11. Death -- martyrdom for CHRIST (2:10)
12. Holding fast CHRIST's name (2:13)
13. Loyalty to Christian faith (2:13)
14. Faithfulness to CHRIST (2:13)
15. Charity (spiritual love) (2:19)
16. Spiritual service (2:19)
17. Faith (2:19)
18. Separation (2:24)
19. Spiritual watchfulness (3:2)
20. Strengthening of spiritual life (3:2)
21. Appreciating spiritual blessings (3:3)
22. Conserving spiritual blessings (3:3)
23. Contending for spiritual blessings (3:3)
24. Spiritual repentance (3:3)
25. Spiritual separation unto CHRIST (3:4)
26. Dedication of all to CHRIST (3:8)

27. Loyalty to CHRIST's Word (3:8)
28. Loyalty to CHRIST's name (3:8)
29. Second Coming Hope (3:10)
30. Openness to CHRIST (3:20)

CHRIST CONDEMNS

01. Loss of first love (occupancy with CHRIST) (2:4)
02. Balaamism (worldliness) (2:14)
03. Spiritual stumbling-block (2:14)
04. Fornication (spiritual or physical) (2:14)
05. Nicolaitanism (man supplanting GOD) (2:6, 15)
06. Spiritual error (2:20)
07. Idolatry (2:20)
08. Spiritual seduction (2:20)
09. Sinful toleration (error, idolatry, seduction, sin) (2:20)
10. Spiritual stubbornness (2:21)
11. Failure to repent (2:21)
12. Adultery (spiritual or physical) (2:22)
13. Profession without possession (3:1)
14. Mere religious ritualism (3:1)
15. Mere religious formalism (3:1)
16. Spiritual deadness (3:1)
17. Spiritual unappreciation (3:3)
18. Spiritual carelessness (3:3)
19. Spiritual imitation (3:9)
20. Spiritual egotism (pride) (3:9)
21. Spiritual lukewarmness (3:15-16)
22. Spiritual overconfidence (3:17)
23. Spiritual self-sufficiency (3:17)
24. Material-mindedness (3:17)
25. Spiritual ignorance (3:17-18)

01. Ephesus: The Apostolic (Powerful) Church
02. Smyrna - The Suffering Church
03. Pergamos - The Compromised Church
04. Thyatira - The Church Settled in Sin
05. Sardis - The Dead Church
06. Philadelphia - The Fundamental Church
07. Laodicea - The Church CHRIST Spews Out

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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