

# Revelation Study Guide

## Chapter 2



### The Panorama of Church Past, Present, and future - Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thytira

God wholly gives the entire Bible to men, and these men were used as ink pens until each ran out of ink, starting all the way from the first book in the Bible to the last. John was no different. John does have some comments and puts in his feelings about what he envisioned but make no mistake, the words of this book flow from God to John.

Starting in chapter 2, we will read the letters written to the seven churches. We will see this number over and over again in this book because it has a special meaning. Let us look at the number "seven", In Hebrew, seven is "shevah". It is from the root "savah", to be full or satisfied, or to have enough of. Hence this root dominates the meaning of the word "seven", for on the seventh day God rested from the work of creation. It was full and complete, perfect. Nothing could be added or taken away from it.

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Jesus Christ chose these churches and this number. The number shows the concept of completion or perfection. The significance here is probably that these seven letters represent the full message of God to the church for all the ages.

There were more than seven churches in Asia at the time the book of Revelation was written. In fact there were hundreds of churches located in cities all over the world by that time. Why were these churches singled out? These churches were local congregations in specific cities, but they were more than literal churches. They were symbolic and representative of every type of Christian church and every church age. God wanted to give us a picture of the Christian church from the beginning to its end, so He chose seven cities whose name, history, and actual spiritual conditions would mirror seven historical developments of history.

He used this as the teaching type to tell us what the church is going to go through. The Symbolic aspect would be for you to be able to look around your local church right now, see what it teaches, compare it to the letters to the churches and find where you fit in. There is another symbolism here, your heart and life in a spiritual sense fit into one of these categories. You will be able to check your walk with God against the letters? Another symbolic meaning is the basic division of church history. Here are seven typical churches where we see the overriding characteristic of seven successive eras of church history. The book of Revelation is a prophetic book. It tells the future. In light of this it must be understood that the message to the seven churches tells the future of the Christian church. Each message has a prophetic application to its age. For example I believe we are in the "Laodicea" church age right now.

Jesus has a message for each specific church and church type, remember this is prophetic. A candlestick is to be a light bearer. Christ is the light of the world. The church is to bear and share the light of the world that is in darkness. It is the job of the star (Pastor) that is in the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ to set the candlestick on fire. It is the candlestick's job to share that fire and be the light of the world. It is the responsibility of the Pastors of that time period to be so tuned into Jesus that when the letter comes to his particular church that he understands the message and preach that message to his congregation. It is also the responsibility of the Pastors today to open this book of Revelation, read these letters, get in tune with Christ, preaching what the Holy Spirit wants preached to his church. If the Pastor finds that his church is falling short of what God's word commands, he needs to do all he can to bring his congregation in line with wishes of God as revealed in His word, or face the possibility of his church suffering through the tribulation period. Only Philadelphia & Smyrna seems to be ready and acceptable in the sight of God. The Pastor must quickly proclaim the truth to his flock before the Rapture takes place, or his church will surely face the Tribulation period and most will probably perish in the lake of fire. All of these messages are very stern except for two. Understand that Jesus is talking to those of us who are supposed to be His people not the world that doesn't know him or those that insist on openly worshipping Satan. He is talking to what is supposed to be the "born again believer", and as you will see he is not very happy with what is going on in His church.

How does the church fit in God's overall plan? One of the main confusions with Bible Prophecy is that when Jesus came, Christians became the chosen people and God replaced the Jews with the Christians and forgot about the Jew. This is called "Israel replacement theology". These Christians and theologians believe that the church became Israel and that every prophecy pertaining to Israel pertains to the church. This is not so. You can believe me when I tell you there are some prophecies in the Bible that you wouldn't want applied to your church. God made covenants with the Jews that He will still honor. He will see that Israel is the premier nation of the world in the final phase of His plan, which has been His plan since He made the covenant with Abraham (The plan that God has for the Jews will be revealed in the coming chapters of this guide). But God also has promises and prophecies for the church.

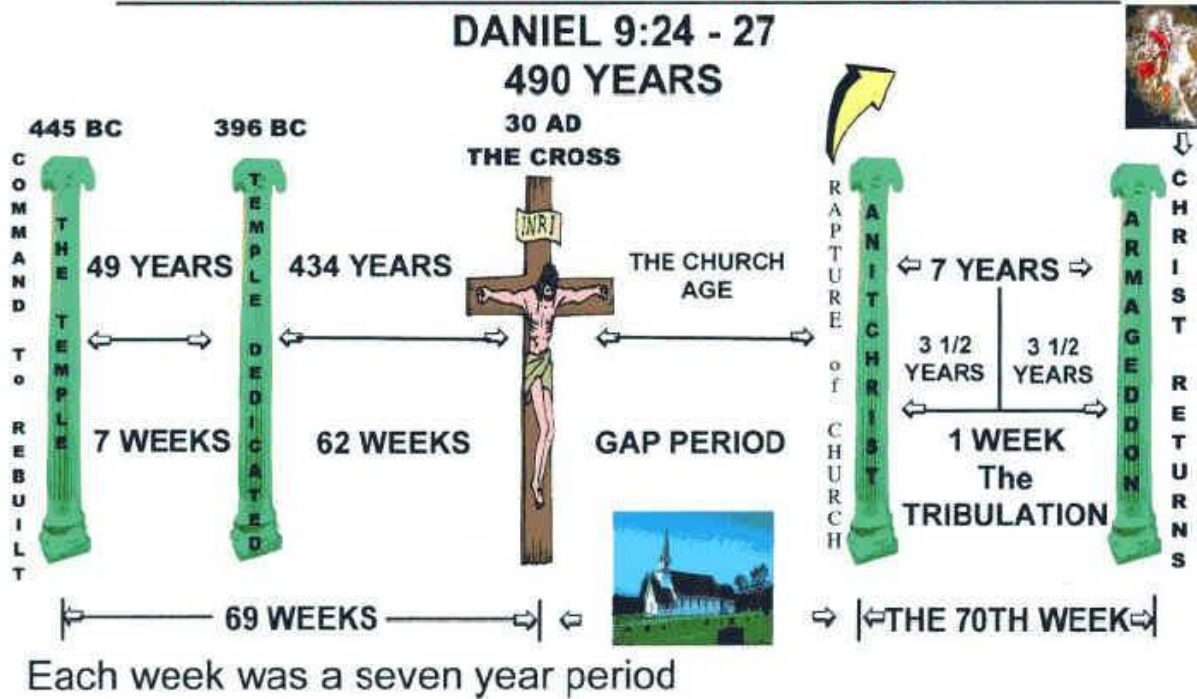
How do the church and Israel fit together? God has known His plan from the beginning of time, but this particular part of His plan starts with the nation of Israel being disobedient to God and a prophet of God bringing forth a message of judgment. According to God's law the Israelites were not to harvest their land on the seventh year. The Israelites were required to let the land rest so that the land could build back up for the next six years of harvest. But Israel got greedy and decided that they couldn't let the land rest the seventh year and stopped obeying and depending on God. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would be in captivity for 70 years because of their disobedience. This brings us to the time where Israel was sacked by Babylon and the prophet Daniel was held in captivity, while in captivity Daniel was given a message from an angel telling him that 70 weeks have been determined upon Israel and it will be divided into three sections. (This information found in ***Daniel Chapter 9:24***)

Seven years meant a unit of sevens or a complete cycle (a week actually translated into seven years) which seven years multiplied by 70, equal's 490 years. This total of 490 physical years is the 70 weeks that are mentioned in the prophecy.

The angel tells Daniel that this period will start when Israel is released from Babylon and it will be seven weeks when the temple is rebuilt (7weeks times 7 years equals 49 years). History shows us this is exactly what happened, the Jews were set free and it was 49 years until the temple was rebuilt. After this 49-year period it will be 62 weeks before the Messiah will come, and 434 years later (7 weeks times 62 years equals 434 years). Simeon (the Rabbi that blessed Jesus after he was born and taken to the temple) understood the prophecy from

# THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

## 490 YEARS TO FINISH ISRAEL'S INIQUITY



It was revealed to Daniel that the nation of Israel would experience a 490 year period of time that was to start with a command for them to return to their home land. The time would end with the coming of the Messiah to begin the 1000 year Kingdom.

the Book of Daniel and knew that when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple to be blessed that He was the Messiah. He may not have had the exact day that Jesus would appear but Simeon knew he was in the right time period for Jesus appearance. This 434-year mark is the day that Jesus was proclaimed king and given a parade into Jerusalem. Then Jesus was cut off and as the Bible says He was cut off, but not for himself. He was crucified for our sins, He didn't die for himself, He died for us. When He was crucified, it marks the end of the 69<sup>th</sup> week of the prophecy. Forty-nine years plus 434 years, there is still one week or a one seven-year period determined on Israel. This is where the prophetic clock stopped ticking for an undetermined amount of time. There is still a week that is determined on Israel that they will have to go through, this is the 70<sup>th</sup> week or a

seven-year period and that seven-year period the antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel. This is the seven-year tribulation period that all whom are not Raptured will face, this starts after Chapter 4.

Jesus was crucified about 30 AD and this should have started the 70<sup>th</sup> week. But had it actually started then the antichrist would have come. The earth would have already seen the amazing things that are in book of Revelation come to pass. Jesus would have returned and set up his eternal kingdom. We would now be living in eternity, and this would be the perfect kingdom. Well if this is it, I'm kind of disappointed. Obviously the rapture hasn't taken place, obviously the Tribulation period hasn't taken place yet. Something else happened, called the church. In 70 AD Rome destroyed the temple and scattered Israel and although the Jews lived scattered as individuals they no longer were a nation. They didn't occupy and control Jerusalem anymore, the city had been sacked and destroyed as they knew it. Every attempt to restore Israel as a city or nation has met with disaster. In 1948 they were able to return and become a nation again.

Now when the church was born with the death of Jesus it was like a wedge stuck in the prophetic time clock stopping seven minutes until 12 when the prophetic clock hits 12, Christ will Rapture His church. The church must go through its seven phases as revealed in the seven messages in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, when it finished it's seven phases you can expect the rapture and immediately following with the seven-year tribulation period. So as we see the signs of the Laodicean church age (details in chapter 3), and it's movement, then you know you are in the final phase. **And there is just a short time left until the rapture of the church** (end of chapter 3).

The born again part of the church is eternal. There is a point where the church stops here on the earth. This is when the Rapture takes place. The church will cease on earth because it has a new ministry that we will talk about later. What you want to be sure of is that you are not part of the last church and we will see why when we get to that part of chapter 3. We are in this age now and as you read it will become very clear that this church age is all around us.



We are going to look at each church now and see how it fits into a historical time period before it ever happens.

Each of the seven letters was addressed to a literal church, and in each church a special messenger or representative would receive the letter and present it's content to the congregation. Each letter also follows a common, concise format, as follow.

1. Destination – The church to which the letter is written is clearly addressed. Each church's location will have a pertinent historical background important to understanding each message.
2. Description of Christ – Jesus Christ describes himself to each church in a way that is appropriate for the message to that church.

3. Commendation – The good qualities and strengths are recognized and Jesus points them out. Only one church fails in getting a commendation and it is Laodicea. That is interesting since they have so much to say about themselves, (we are wealthy, we have God's prosperity, God's new move, Gold teeth? Laughing spirit?).
4. Condemnation – This is where Jesus brings to our attention the faults of the church. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia have no condemnation and amazingly they are the only two physical churches still standing today.
5. Council – Jesus makes an authoritative command to straighten out the deficiency and gives the remedy to the weakness, Jesus always gives a remedy, but not all will obey.
6. Discrimination – He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. Those with a spiritual sense will understand that he is not playing games and correct their actions. Others will not hear.
7. Promise – A promise is held out to each to encourage its reformation (or repentance, or correction).

Prophetic application - Would be each churches historical role. Each letter will be a prophecy describing the role each church is to play during the subsequent nineteen centuries.

Now let us read what Jesus has to say to each of our churches and let us see if we can understand where we stand in God's sight.