

THE CHURCH AGE

Revelation 2-3

Revelation 2 and 3 may seem out of place in the book of Revelation as, on the surface, they don't appear to be prophetic. In these chapters, Jesus instructed John to write seven letters, one to each of the seven churches in Asia Minor. These letters indicated the heart condition of each church that existed in John's day.

However, in hindsight we can now see that prophetically, the letters also foretold and corresponded to specific periods of church history that were yet to come.

Collectively, these periods, which commenced in 30AD at the conception of the early church, is known as The Church Age. It will conclude at the Coming of the Lord when the church will be raptured, leaving the Earth with no church as the world enters the time of Tribulation.

The chart below identifies the main theme of each letter and describes the period of church history each letter represents, along with their approximate dates.



EPHESUS

Apostolic Church
30AD - 100AD

As a wealthy seaport, believers could easily become self-reliant, losing their first love. This represents the eager beginnings of the church when the apostles were still alive. But when they died and more non-Jewish believers, with their pagan customs joined the believing community, the church also began to lose its first love.

SMYRNA

Persecuted Church
100AD - 313AD

The Jews allied themselves with the Roman authorities against the Christians in Smyrna, resulting in many martyrs. Prophetically, commencing in 96AD under Domitian's rule, the church suffered severe persecution, lasting over 200 years. There were 10 emperors during this time inflicting pain and death to the believers.

PERGAMUM

Roman Empire Church
313AD - 600AD

This city was a den of idolatry and their practices infiltrated the early church. Similarly, in AD313 Constantine ended persecution by declaring Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. As thousands of pagans entered the church, so too did their idolatrous customs.

THYATIRA

Roman Catholic Church
600AD - 1517AD

John's letter speaks of a Jezebel in Thyatira, who led believers astray through false doctrine from her position of power. Likewise, after the Roman Empire fractured, The Roman Catholic Church was the only unifying world power, and introduced many heresies, like idol worship, that persist today.

SARDIS

Reformation Church
1517AD - 1648AD

Faith without works is dead, and Sardis was guilty of this. Following the Catholic age came the period of Reformation which brought a recommitment to Biblical truth and doctrine. Catholic heresies were abandoned, but so too was evangelism and charitable deeds - a time of faith without works.

PHILADELPHIA

Missionary Church
1648AD - 20th Century

Like Smyrna, believers here faced persecution, and their small church held strong. Earthquakes also ravaged the city, creating a culture of determination. In 1648, the war between the Protestants and Catholics ended, making way for a missionary movement that gave rise to numerous smaller Spirit-filled churches. These churches, like Philadelphia, were persecuted but stood firm, resulting in a spreading of the Gospel at a pace unseen since the time of Jesus.

LAODICEA

Apostate Church
20th Century - Today

Laodicea was a very rich city and its members were self-sufficient. Its church had a great portion of unbelievers, whose influence led to apostasy. Similarly, the 20th century saw the rise of Evolution, and more recently, a rejection of God in society and governments, even in "Christian" nations. This current apostasy and reliance on self will increase leading into the Tribulation.