

The Church in Prophetic Perspective

Scripture: Revelation 2-3

Code: 1437

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation is the Apocalypse--the unveiling and manifestation of Jesus Christ in His full glory. It is a book in which all things find an echo and a reverberation. It delineates the consummation of the ages. It touches things in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. It speaks predominantly about Jesus Christ. But it also talks about angels, demons, war in heaven, Armageddon, the judgment of God, the breaking of seals, the sounding of trumpets, and the pouring out of bowls. It speaks of the new heaven and the new earth. It announces the destruction of the grave--of death, hell, and the enemies of Christ. It is our destiny because it tells us where we will spend eternity.

John said, "... the time is at hand" (Rev. 1:3). When John looked upon Jesus in His eternal deity, he fell over like he was dead (Rev. 1:17). That is how the book of Revelation begins. In Revelation 1:13-16, Christ was pictured as moving among seven lampstands, or seven churches. In Revelation 2--3, the identity of those churches--and their meaning in time, history, and prophecy--are unfolded for us.

A. An Outline of Revelation

1. THE VISION OF CHRIST

In Revelation 1:19, Christ tells John to "write the things which thou hast seen" The things he had seen are in Revelation 1:1-18. What did he see? The vision of the glorified Son.

2. THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

Christ told John to write "the things which are ..." (v. 19). Those things were the letters to the churches that existed at that time. They are found in Revelation 2--3.

3. THE EVENTS OF THE END TIMES

Finally Christ told John to write "the things which shall be hereafter" (v. 19). Those things begin in Revelation 4 and continue to the end of the book.

So verse 19 contains the outline of the book of Revelation: the things that John had seen, the things that are, and the things that shall be. He had seen a vision of Christ. He was to write to the seven churches that existed at that time, and record all of the events of the end time that culminated in the glorification of Christ at His second coming.

B. An Overview of the Churches

Our study will cover the section on the seven churches found in Revelation 2:1--3:22. Those churches existed at the time John wrote, about 96 A.D. They were real churches in real towns in real places in Asia Minor. However, their importance lies in their prophetic implications.

1. A PERSONAL MESSAGE

In this section, John gives a personal message to each of the seven churches. They are listed in the order you would visit them in Asia Minor if you followed a counterclockwise circle upon leaving Ephesus. Every exhortation John gives them is spoken with urgency in the light of the return of Christ.

2. A PROPHETIC PERSPECTIVE

We are going to overview the seven churches in order to discover what they teach us. We want to answer this question: What is their prophetic perspective?

The churches illustrate four areas of truth about all churches, and consequently, about all believers. The four truths that those churches portray are: The Persecution of the Churches, The Prophecy of the Churches, The Problem of the Churches, and The Purpose of the Churches. First, let's look at ...

I. THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCHES

A. The Reign of Persecution

All seven of the churches were under the persecution of the Roman Emperor Domitian (who reigned from +A.D. 81-96). Certain methods of persecution had been developed: People were boiled in oil, strung up by their fingers, and had things pushed underneath their fingernails. Then they would be killed. All seven of those churches existed in the midst of that kind of serious persecution.

B. The Reasons for Persecution

You say, "Why were they persecuted? What were they doing that was so wrong?" The people in the churches at the time of Domitian were second generation Christians (most of the first generation had died). They were persecuted for five basic reasons:

1. THEY HAD MISSIONARY ZEAL

The nature of Christianity is missionary--Christians try to win people to Christ. Consequently, they were persecuted.

2. THEY DEMANDED OBEDIENCE TO THE KING OF KINGS

Christians were persecuted because they demanded absolute and total obedience to the King of kings, and not to Caesar. That didn't endear them to Caesar!

3. THEY REFUSED TO BOW TO HEATHEN IDOLS

When an emperor issued a proclamation that the people were to worship a certain god, they bowed down--or else! But Christians didn't do that.

4. THEY WERE THOUGHT TO BE CANNIBALS

People in the Roman Empire believed that Christians were cannibals because they had heard about what was called, "the Last Supper," "Communion," or "the breaking of bread." When they heard that Christians were eating the body and the blood of the Lord, they assumed that they were cannibals. Rumors began that Christians ate little babies. Later, that reason was used as a pretense for persecuting Christians.

5. THEY WERE LOOKED DOWN ON

Everyone looked down on Christians, considering them to be the trash of the earth.

Since Christians wouldn't bow to his wishes, Domitian tried to annihilate them. That is something many people have tried to do throughout the years--without any success.

C. The Reflection of Persecution

The true Christ-honoring church will be hated by the world. It was hated during the reign of Domitian and it is still hated today. The church that honors Jesus Christ is the antagonist of the world, so the world hates it. The best commentary on any church is what the world thinks of it.

Domitian mercilessly persecuted the seven churches. Prophetically, they reflect the persecution of the true church in all ages.

1. ACTS 14:22 -- Paul said, "... we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

2. 1 PETER 2:21 -- "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us"

That is the badge of your faithfulness. Any church that is a true church--if it names the name of Jesus Christ and lives a Christlike life--is going to antagonize the world and thus be persecuted.

The second truth we want to look at is ...

II. THE PROPHECY OF THE CHURCHES

How do these churches fit into a prophetic book? John is writing to the ministers of those churches with instructions. (The term "Angels" in the text literally means "messengers.") What does that have to do with prophecy? He is not foretelling the future. But that instruction does have prophetic importance in three ways. First, those churches have prophetic importance because they can be seen as ...

A. Representing All Churches

You say, "What do you mean by that?" Seven is God's sacred number. It symbolizes completion, perfection, totality. By choosing seven churches, He is saying in effect, "This is My message to the total church." Although the churches were actual churches existing in Asia Minor, they represent the complete picture of the total church. So when Christ speaks to those churches, He is speaking to all the churches of all time. Although the messages in Revelation 2--3 are often overlooked by Christians, they have a tremendous meaning for the church today. That is why John concludes every one of the seven letters with the same words: "He that hath an ear, let him hear ..." (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In other words, whatever age you are alive, these messages are for you. There is tremendous prophetic importance in those churches because their messages represent the total message to the total church.

Second, the churches have prophetic importance because they can be seen as ...

B. Representing Different Churches

Throughout the history of the church, there have been different types of churches. The Ephesian church is one type of church and so is the Smyrnaean church, the Laodicean church, and the Pergamene church. They represent the seven different types of churches. Basically, all churches fall into one of seven different categories, with some combination of characteristics. Each of those seven types existed in John's day.

1. DETERMINING THE DIFFERENCES

You say, "Why did He select those seven when there were other churches in that world that he could have selected?" Those seven churches exactly represent the seven different types. The same seven types exist today. Although every individual in a church is different, churches still fall into categories that make them different from other churches. You can go to one church that is totally different than another church. It is the mixture of people who make them different, but they still seem to fit into one of those seven categories. For example, if a majority of the members running the church are Ephesian-type people, then the church will be an Ephesian-type church. If most of the people are Laodicean-type people, then the church will be a Laodicean-type church. Whoever rules the church will determine what type it will be.

2. DESCRIBING THE DIFFERENCES

John portrays the different types of churches in Revelation 2-- 3. He begins with ...

a. The Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:4 says, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." The church at Ephesus had fallen out of love with Jesus. The warmth was gone. The fire and flame had waned. Here was a church that was doctrinally correct, but was cold. You can be right theologically, but if you have lost your first love for Jesus Christ, then your theology is nothing but cold academics. It is the beautiful combination of sound doctrine and love for Christ that makes a church what it should be. The Ephesian church represents the church that is doctrinally pure, yet cold. It had lost its first love because the people willingly walked away from it.

b. The Church at Smyrna

The church at Smyrna represents the suffering, persecuted church. Revelation 2:10 says, "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." Christ says that the church at Smyrna will suffer.

You say, "I don't know of any suffering churches." What about the church in China? They are suffering. No one knows how many tens of thousands of Christians have been martyred in Communist China. Even closer to home, missionaries suffer abuse in South America. Some of the Christians who really love Jesus Christ even suffer abuse in the United States.

Christ can't even find anything wrong with the church at Smyrna because the dross is burned up when a church suffers for Jesus Christ.

c. The Church at Pergamum

This is the church that married the world. Revelation 2:13 says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is" Where is Satan's throne? He is the prince of the world. The church that marries the world is characterized by a country club atmosphere with no standards. It is socially oriented--doing anything for the sake of social preservation. It is compromising--never taking a true stand. It lowers its standards to cater to compromising people. It is more concerned with the fashions of the world than with the things of God. There are many of those kind of churches existing today.

d. The Church at Thyatira

Revelation 2:20 says, "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou allowest that woman, Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." That is the sinful church that teaches false doctrine.

1) Tolerating False Doctrine

Sin and false doctrine always appear together. Whenever false doctrine enters into a church, sin follows. For example, the church at Corinth was subject to false teachers. As a result, sin became widespread throughout the church. The church at Thyatira represents the church characterized by sin and false doctrine. Where there is a tolerance for false doctrine, theological liberalism begins to creep in and the gospel is watered down. That is how Satan brings about sin.

2) Teaching the Social Gospel

When the social gospel replaces the true gospel, sin becomes widespread. It happens because false doctrine removes the doctrine of Christ as taught in the Word of God. It teaches different doctrine about the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, His blood atonement, and His second coming. When the true gospel is watered down by false doctrine and the social gospel, sin is the natural result. The dances at a Methodist church in Glendale had to be patrolled by the police department after the sponsors at a previous dance participated in nude dancing! What a mockery! The name of Jesus Christ was blasphemed by a church that displays a cross on the outside. False doctrine opens the door to sin. There is nothing to hold it back.

e. The Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1 says, "... I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and [but] art dead." The word kai in the Greek text can be translated "and" or "but." I think the better translation in this

verse is "but." At a Sardian-type church, someone cuts the grass, paints the walls, prints the bulletin, and stands in the pulpit. But that church isn't alive; it's dead. The church at Sardis is the dead church.

I remember a particular church that was experiencing much growth, and the pastor was excited about it. But one day the board came to him and said, "We have had enough of this growth. Those of us who have been here for a long time are getting pushed out. We liked it when it was our own little church." The church had just purchased some property on a very busy corner where it could have had a tremendous testimony. However, the pastor packed his bags and left that church. Today it still exists on that corner. People walk in and out of it, but it's not alive; it's dead. A dead church is worthless to God.

f. The Church at Philadelphia

This is a beautiful church. Revelation 3:8 says, "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." God has opened a door to the world in this church. People can go through it to reach the world with the gospel. This is also a church where Jesus Christ is not denied. Its strength is in God, who said, "... My strength is made perfect in weakness...." (2 Cor. 12:9). This is a faithful, Christ-honoring, zealous, missionary-minded church that is alive with the flame of evangelism and in love with Jesus Christ. This is the kind of church that brings glory to God.

You say, "Is it the perfect church?" No. According to verse 9, they had their problems, too. But if ever there was a church that close to perfection, it was the church at Philadelphia. It shunned sin, false doctrine, and compromise, and it kept its love alive.

g. The Church at Laodicea

This is the apostate church where Satan dwells. It isn't a church; it's a counterfeit. Revelation 3:15-16 says, "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 spew thee out of My mouth." This is the church that sickens God. It is on its way to hell. It is a liberal church run by a cult that denies the true gospel. It is accursed and damned, but will thrive during the Tribulation.

With the exception of Smyrna and Philadelphia, the churches progressed from bad to worse. Ephesus was cold, but the last two were dead and apostate.

C. Representing Different Church Members

Not only are there seven types of churches, but there are seven types of church members.

1. THE MAKEUP OF THE MEMBERS

a. In Ephesus

I know that there are some Ephesian-type members in this church. Just as there is an Ephesian church, there is an Ephesian-type church member. If the second generation Christian church could grow cold, imagine what could happen to us? They were much closer to the enthusiasm of the first generation than we are. I know there are Ephesian members whose love is cooling. They used to burn with love for Christ, but not any more. They have left their first love.

b. In Smyrna

There are also Smyrna-type members in the church. They pay for their boldness for Christ by suffering. They give testimony to Jesus Christ and suffer abuse from people for doing that. I know of people who are willing to open their mouth to share Jesus Christ no matter how people criticize them or what it might cost them. I thank God for Smyrna-type members!

c. In Pergamum

The church at Pergamum was married to the world. There are members in the church today who are married to the world. They are preoccupied with their money, car, job, fashion, and themselves. They are concerned about how they relate to the world, but they are making compromises to Satan. They are unwilling to pay the price of a true disciple, so they lower their standards to court the world and discredit the name of Jesus Christ. They weaken the church and are useless to God.

d. In Thyatira

The church at Thyatira was full of false doctrine and sin. I know there are church members who are living in sin. You say, "How do you know that?" Because the Bible says that no church will be without it. Wherever God sows good seed, Satan is going to sow bad seed. The people who are living in sin usually justify it with false doctrine. Some are courting secret sin--it's hidden from the church, but visible to God. You say, "If I'm courting secret sin, and nobody knows it, then it doesn't hurt anyone." But it does. The Bible says, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Gal. 5:9). We have got to keep sin out of the church.

e. In Sardis

I think there are Sardis members in the church. They are spiritually dead. They couldn't get excited about Jesus Christ no matter what happened. They are in a spiritual stupor--nothing happens in their lives.

f. In Philadelphia

Praise the Lord that there are Philadelphia-type members in the church! The church at Philadelphia had an open door to the world--it was missionary-minded. It kept sound doctrine and never denied Christ's name. I believe that there is a majority of fruitful and faithful members in the church. They are in love with Christ and eager to share Him with others. They are missionary-minded and zealous.

g. In Laodicea

God forbid, but I imagine that there are Laodiceans in the church. They don't even know Jesus Christ; yet they come to church. They go through spiritual motions. But they are false believers. In the end they will say, "Lord, Lord. It's us." But He is going to say, "... I never knew you; depart from Me ..." (Mt. 7:23).

2. THE MOTIVATION FOR THE MEMBERS

What kind of member are you? You say, "Can I change what I am?" Sure you can. Would you like some motivation to change what you are?

a. For the Ephesian

You say, "I'm an Ephesian-type church member because my love has grown cold." Revelation 2:7 says, "... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

b. For the Smyrnaean

You say, "I'm suffering and I might not be able to handle the pressure anymore." Revelation 2:11 says, "... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." If you are in Christ, the second death has no power over you.

c. For the Pergamene

Revelation 2:17 says, "... 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 except he that receiveth it."

d. For the Thyatiran

Revelation 2:26 says, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations."

e. For the Sardian

Revelation 3:5 says, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

f. For the Philadelphian

Revelation 3:12 says, "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, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him My new name."

g. For the Laodicean

Revelation 3:21 says, "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."

Christ says again and again, "If you will be what I want you to be, I will reward you." That is tremendous motivation!

The messages to the seven churches were prophetic because they describe seven types of churches and seven types of believers who make up those churches. Those members determine what their church will be. If the control of the church is in the hands of a particular type of member, then it will be that type of church. Thus the messages are not merely historical; they are prophetic. They are living messages from the living Lord as He walks among the lampstands--trimming the lamps and ministering to the churches.

Now I want you to see ...

III. THE PROBLEM OF THE CHURCHES

The problem of the church is that it is a mixture of good and evil. Jesus Christ said that the church age would be characterized by a combination of wheat and tares (Mt. 13:24-25)--the good and the bad, the true and the false.

A. The Sowing of Evil

1. IN THE CHURCH

Some people say, "If we could only get back to the days of apostolic church, there wouldn't be a problem." But the apostolic church had the same problems we do. The same people also say, "Do you mean that the church that was under the shepherdly care and guidance of the Apostles was still filled with heresy, schism, false doctrine, corruption, and sin?" Exactly. That's nothing new. There will always be tares among the wheat. That's what Jesus said! There is no perfect church, and there never was--not even in the days of the Apostles. Each of the seven churches had a problem: the presence of evil.

You say, "What about the church at Philadelphia?" They were also subject to the presence of evil, but it didn't have any effect. You say, "What about the church at Smyrna?" Evil was present there, too. Every church has problems.

a. Ephesus

Did the church at Ephesus have a mixture of good and evil? Yes. Revelation 2:2 says, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them who are evil; and thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." In other words, they had conflict with false teachers; yet they dealt with them appropriately. However, in verse 4 Christ says, "... thou hast left thy first love."

b. Smyrna

Revelation 2:9 says, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich); and I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." They had conflict, too.

c. Pergamum

Revelation 2:13 says, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is"

d. Thyatira

Revelation 2:19-20 says, "I know thy works, and love, 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 allowest that woman, Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Good and bad influences were in the same congregation.

e. Sardis

Revelation 3:4 says, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy." There were a few people who remained faithful. But verse 1 says, "... I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Good and bad people were present in Sardis.

f. Philadelphia

Revelation 3:8-9 says, "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, who 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." The synagogue of Satan was present in Philadelphia.

g. Laodicea

In Laodicea just about everything was bad. There was a minimal amount of good there.

Every church pictured has a combination of good and evil--that is the way the church will always be until Christ returns.

2. BY SATAN

There has never been a perfect church. In every case where God sows good seed, Satan sows evil. Satan is a reality, and he wants to sow evil in the church. We need to fight him.

a. In Heaven

God sowed good seed in heaven. But when harvest came, the angels left their first estate and forsook their thrones in rebellion (Ezk. 28:1-10).

b. At Man's First Offering

God sowed good seed at that offering, but Satan sowed murder when Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:3-8).

c. At the Flood

God had sons on the earth before the flood, but the sons of the wicked one were more numerous (Gen. 6:4-5).

d. Among the Apostles

God sowed good seed in the lives of the Apostles, but even among them there was Judas (Mt. 26:20-25).

e. Among the Early Converts

God sowed good seed among the converts of the early church, but even among them there was Ananias, Sapphira, and Simon Magus (Ac. 5:1-10; 8:9-24).

Christ will be opposed by the Antichrist, the temple of God will be indwelt by men of sin, and missionaries realize that everywhere they go to sow the Word of God, Satan will try to sow evil. There is no perfect church--there never was, and there never will be until we are redeemed and glorified.

B. The Suppression of Evil

1. CHRIST'S FUTURE JUDGMENT

In the parable in Matthew 13:24-30, the Savior taught that wheat and tares would grow together. He explained that we wouldn't be able to determine who are the tares and the wheat. We can't even attempt to harvest them. But someday when Jesus comes as the righteous harvester and judge, He will separate the wheat and the tares (darnels)--the true from the false. The problem of the church is illustrated in the seven churches because they all experienced the conflict between good and evil.

2. CHRIST'S PRESENT SERVICE

You say, "Does Christ give up on the church because it is a mixture of good and evil?" No. In Revelation 1:13-16, Christ is seen moving among the churches and ministering to them. He hasn't left. He knows the church is in that condition because sin is a reality.

Finally, let's look at ...

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCHES

A. The Perspective of the World

People say, "The church has failed miserably. It has never done a thing for anybody. Christ has failed. Just look at the world. There are wars, hatred, disease, injustices, and terrible disasters. And then someone tries to say that God loves the world. What kind of love is that? People in the church

haven't healed all our social ills. They haven't taken care of poverty or brought about a `golden age.'"

B. The Plan of God

Has the church failed? The world says yes. I say no. The purpose of the church was not to bring about a golden age, or to redeem the whole world. In fact, the church has been here two thousand years and the world has become worse. But the church hasn't failed. The plan of God is on a perfect schedule. Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me ..." (Jn. 6:37). Its purpose was never to bring a golden age by redeeming or perfecting the world.

1. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:22 -- According to Paul the purpose of the church is to "save some." That is our purpose. The majority will never listen. The church will always be a mixture, not a failure. God said that good would not exist without the presence of evil. As a result, He is calling out an elect people for His name. That is the purpose of the church.

2. ACTS 15:13-15 -- "And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath declared how God first did visit the nations, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written." In other words, God came into this world in the form of Christ just to take out of it a people for His name. The Greek word for church is ekklesia which means, "the called out ones." The majority will never come to Christ. The church is a called-out group--a remnant.

3. LUKE 12:32 -- Jesus Christ said, "Fear not, little flock" His people have always been a little flock.

God's purpose continues to be to call out a remnant from every age for His name. The purpose of the church was never to bring a golden age, but to be God's vehicle for calling out a people for His name. And in Romans 8:30 Paul says, "... whom He called, them He also justified" No matter where a man may preach, many will turn him down. No matter how high the cross is lifted up or how often grace is proclaimed, the multitudes will reject Christ. But there will always be a small remnant fulfilling the purpose of the church. God will continue to call out His little flock. Good and evil exist together as wheat and tares, but God's plan isn't frustrated.

You say, "Are you discouraged when you preach and no one comes to Christ?" No, I examine my own heart to see if I've been honest before God in my preparation. I am never discouraged because every time I preach, I know that most people are going to say no. But I also know that someone who belongs in God's flock will say yes and come to Christ.

We have looked at the church in prophetic perspective. We have seen its persecution, prophecy, problem, and purpose. Are you a part of that church? And if you are a part, what type of church do

you fit into?

Focusing on the Facts

1. Briefly describe the book of Revelation. What are some of the events that take place in it?
2. What is the outline of Revelation. (see Rev. 1:19)
3. Where are the seven churches located that John is writing to?
4. Why is there urgency in the exhortation that John gives to the seven churches?
5. What are four areas of truth that the seven churches illustrate?
6. Who was persecuting the seven churches?
7. Why were the seven churches being persecuted? Give an explanation for each reason.
8. What prophetic implication does the persecution of the seven churches have for all churches?
9. What does the number seven symbolize?
10. Why did Christ select the churches that He did when there were other churches that He could have selected?
11. What type of church does the church at Ephesus represent?
12. What type of church does the church at Smyrna represent? Why didn't Jesus find anything wrong with that church?
13. What type of church does the church at Pergamum represent?
14. What type of church does the church at Thyatira represent?
15. What is the result when the social gospel replaces the true gospel?
16. What type of church does the church at Sardis represent?
17. What type of church does the church at Philadelphia represent? Is it the perfect church?

18. What type of church does the church at Laodicea represent?
19. In what way are each of the members of the different types of churches representative of their particular church?
20. What is characteristic of a person who is married to the world?
21. Why is it dangerous for people in the church to be courting secret sin?
22. What are the motivations for change that Christ has given to each of the different types of church members?
23. What is the problem in the church? What did Jesus say that the church age would be characterized by?
24. How did that problem manifest itself in the church at Ephesus? at Smyrna? at Pergamum? at Thyatira? at Sardis? at Philadelphia?
25. What does Satan sow wherever God sows good seed? Give some examples.
26. What is Jesus Christ presently doing about the problem that exists in the church?
27. What is the purpose of the church? Has it failed? Why or why not?

Pondering the Principles

1. What type of church is your church? What are some of the characteristics of the different types of churches that you see at work in your church? Which ones are most prevalent? What type of church is your church in danger of becoming? Pray that your church would honor Jesus Christ and not follow Satan's path of destruction.
2. What type of church member are you? What characteristics of other types of church members do you see in yourself? Which ones are most prevalent? What type of church member are you in danger of becoming? What is the motivation that you need in order to change who you are? Make the commitment to make the change.
3. What are some of the conflicts that are presently taking place in your church? In each of those conflicts, identify the area where Satan might be sowing evil? What are some of your options for fighting Satan in that conflict? Since Jesus Christ is presently ministering to the churches, take this time to pray about those conflicts. Ask Him to help the people involved in the conflict to identify the

problem. Ask Him to purge the evil that Satan has sown in your church.

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