Introduction to the Seven Churches of Revelation

Rev. 2:1-7
The Churches of the Church age!

THE MESSAGE IS BOTH TIMELY AND TIMELESS

- In one sense, they are as ancient as the Apostle John, but in another, they are as modern as today’s computers.

They were inspired by the Holy Spirit, Authored by God not man —is of the utmost importance. ---

- We should keep in mind that these seven churches represent seven time periods giving us a panoramic view of church history running from Pentecost to the Rapture.
## Lots of diversity in study

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Ephesus Period</th>
<th>Smyrna Period</th>
<th>Pergamum Period</th>
<th>Thyatira Period</th>
<th>Sardis Period</th>
<th>Philadelphia Period</th>
<th>Laodicea Period</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tim La Haye</td>
<td>A.D. 30 to A.D. 100</td>
<td>A.D. 100 to A.D. 312</td>
<td>A.D. 312 to A.D. 606</td>
<td>A.D. 606 to Trib. Period*</td>
<td>A.D. 1520 to Trib. Period*</td>
<td>A.D. 1750 to Trib. Period*</td>
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<td>Hal Lindsey</td>
<td>A.D. 33 to A.D. 100</td>
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<td>A.D. 590 to A.D. 1517</td>
<td>A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1750</td>
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<td>J. Vernon McGee</td>
<td>Pentecost to A.D. 100</td>
<td>A.D. 100 to A.D. 314</td>
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<td>A.D. 590 to A.D. 1000</td>
<td>A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1800</td>
<td>A.D. 1800 to Rapture</td>
<td>Does not say</td>
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<td>Daymond R. Duck</td>
<td>Pentecost to A.D. 100</td>
<td>A.D. 100 to A.D. 312</td>
<td>A.D. 312 to A.D. 590</td>
<td>A.D. 590 to A.D. 1517</td>
<td>A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1750</td>
<td>A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1900</td>
<td>A.D. 1900 to Trib. Mid-Point</td>
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The Three Views

1. **PRACTICALLY**- These conditions existed literally in the seven churches in Asia at the time of the writing.

2. **PERENNIALLY**- In that the conditions and issues addressed with these churches have always existed and will continue in some measure until the Lord returns.

3. **PROPHETICALLY**- That these conditions would mark certain periods of the history of the church and would speak prophetically of those times.
Evaluating These Interpretations

The Letters can be taken as immediate like the Assyrian invasion as a type in Isaiah's time--- and future and specific like the tribulation coming future—Typology—

**FIRSTLY:** The most valid approach is if these periods are seen as broad descriptions of the church throughout history though specifically speaking of individual periods, allowing for generous periods of overlap.

**SECONDLY:** it is good to remember that these letters are a prophecy of the course of church history, this is only part of their significance.

**THIRDLY:** Initially the letters were written to real, existing first-century congregations, and to "all who have an ear to hear."
Why These seven Churches

1) **LOCAL:** actual churches; ---valid and ongoing needs.
2) **ADMONITORY:** "hear...churches" ...really all seven letters apply to all seven churches---or as counsel to every church in every age.
3) **HOMILETIC:** personal: "He that hath an ear...." It applies to you and me.
4) **PROPHETIC:** In their particular order, they lay out the entire history of the church.
5) **THEY FILL THE GAP:** implied in Daniel 9:26, and between Rev 12:5 and 6,
6) **HISTORY:** Acts covered the first 30 years of the church, the Book of Revelation takes it from Acts to His Second Coming -- (2000 years).
What is Prophecy?

The Biblical Definition of Prophecy—\textbf{Isaiah 46:9-11}.

\textbf{IT IS HISTORY WRITTEN IN ADVANCE}

Peter went on in the New Testament to give us further insight into the purpose of prophetic scripture.

\textbf{1 Peter 1:16-18—}

\textbf{NEARLY 28% OF ALL SCRIPTURE IS PROPHETIC.}

Prophecy is God’s revelation of himself to mankind, not mankind’s revelation of who they think God is!
3 Views--The First possibility – The Churches Viewed Practically

1. Ephesus -- The Formal church
2. Smyrna -- The Fearful church
3. Thyatira -- The unrepentant, Faithless church
4. Pergamos -- was the Faltering church.
5. Sardis -- was the Fruitless church.
6. Philadelphia -- was the Feeble church.
7. Laodicea -- was the Fashionable church.
3 Views-- The second Possibility—The Churches Viewed Perennially

1. Ephesus --the issue of --**fundamentalism**.
2. In Smyrna, the problem of-- **ritualism**
3. The problem at Pergamos is-- **clericalism**, 
4. Thyatira the issue of --**sacredotalism**
5. In Sardis the perennial problem is- **liberalism** 
6. Philadelphia we see of-- **revivalism**
7. At Laodicea we see--- **materialism**
3 Views-- The Third possibility—
The Churches Viewed Prophetically

1. Ephesus-- The post-apostolic church
2. Smyrna -- The persecuted church.
3. Pergamo-- The patronized church
4. Thyatira -- The papal church.
5. Sardis-- The Protestant church.
7. Laodicea—The present-day church.  

NEXT WEEK Ephesus!