

The Seven Churches of Revelation

Seven churches, described and identified

	Ephesus 2:1-7	Smyrna 2:8-11	Pergamum 2:12-17	Thyatira 2:18-29	Sardis 3:1-6	Philadelphia 3:7-13	Laodicea 3:14-22
Period described	The early church, to AD 100	The church under pagan persecution, to 313	Paganism enters the church, to 500s	Papal supremacy of Dark Ages, to mid 1500s	Protestant reformation and fossilization, to late 1700s	Awakening, Bibles printed and studied, to mid 1800s	The end-time church, content but sinful, to End.
Opening	To the angel of the church . . . write						
Description of Christ	Holds 7 stars, walks among 7 lampstands	First and Last, Died and came to life	The One with two-edged sword	Eyes of fire, feet like brass; searches minds	Holds 7 spirits and 7 stars	Holy, true, holds keys, opens and shuts	Amen, true witness, Beginning of creation
What Christ knows	Works, labor patience	Works, trials, poverty, blasphemy of false Jews	Works, living where Satan's throne is	More works, love, service, faith, patience	Works, (and see "What you have")	Works	Works: neither cold nor hot
Commendation	Tested false prophets, perseverance	Rich in spite of poverty	Held to My name & faith even in time of martyr	(above)	Have a few names undefiled	Kept command to persevere	◆
Rebuke	Left first love	◆	Ones with doctrine of Balaam	Jezebel with immorality permitted	Works imperfect	◆	Lukewarm, wretched, blind, naked
Counsel	Remember, repent, do first works	Do not fear suffering	Repent	Hold fast till I come	Watch, strengthen remainder	Hold fast, preserve crown	Buy gold, clothes, eye ointment
Warning	Lampstand will be removed	◆	Will fight with sword of mouth	Jezebel into sickbed, children killed	I will come as thief if you do not watch	◆	I will spit you out; rebuke and punishment
What you have	My hatred for Nicolaitans	Tribulation coming	Also have ones with Nicolaitans doctrine	Rest do not have false doctrine, not Satanic depths	A name as alive, but dead (and see above)	A little strength, My word and name	Not what you think you have
Reward for overcomers	Eat from tree of life	Not hurt by second death	Hidden manna, white stone	Power over nations; morning star	Clothed in white, name in book, confessed	Made pillar, inscribed with new name	Sit on my throne
Other promises	◆	Eternal life to ones faithful to death	◆	Rest are given no other burden	Undefiled ones will walk in white	Submission of false Jews; Kept from hour of trial	Eat with those who open door
Closing	Listen to what the Spirit says to the churches						

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THE 7 CHURCHES OF REVELATION REVELATION 2-3

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1 EPHEBUS (2:1-7)

Positives = toil & patient endurance for Jesus' sake, abhorrence of evil & false teaching
Negatives = abandoned first love
Command = remember, repent & return to previous good works
Disobedience = will have their lampstand removed
Obedience = will eat from the tree of life

2 SMYRNA (2:8-11)

Positives = enduring opposition & slander & being spiritually rich
Negatives = none
Command = be faithful to the point of death
Disobedience = none
Obedience = will be given crown of life & will not hurt by the second death

3 PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

Positives = holding fast to Jesus' name & not denying his faith
Negatives = some have accepted false teaching
Command = repent
Disobedience = will face war from the sword of Jesus' mouth
Obedience = will be given hidden manna & a white encribed stone

4 THYATIRA (2:18-29)

Positives = love, faith, service & faithful endurance
Negatives = toleration of false teaching, idolatry & sexual immorality
Command = reject false teaching & hold fast to Jesus
Disobedience = tribulation & death
Obedience = will be given authority over the nations & given the morning star



5 SARDIS (3:1-6)

Positives = none
Negatives = spiritually dead & incomplete in works
Command = wake up, strengthen faith & repent
Disobedience = will be opposed by Jesus who will come like a thief
Obedience = will walk with Jesus, be clothed in white & will have names in the book of life & confessed by Jesus before the Father & angels

6 PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)

Positives = kept Jesus' word, not denied his name & patiently endured
Negatives = none
Command = hold fast
Disobedience = none
Obedience = will be kept from the hour of trial & made a pillar in the temple of God & have name of God, New Jerusalem & Jesus written on them

7 LAODICEA (3:14-22)

Positives = none
Negatives = spiritually lukewarm, wretched, pitiable, poor, blind & naked
Command = buy spiritual gold & save to become spiritually rich, clothed & seeing
Disobedience = be zealous, repent & hear Jesus' voice
Obedience = will eat with Jesus & sit with him on his throne

PATMOS (1:9)

An Aegean island south of Samos, where prisoners were exiled by the Roman authorities. John was sent here 'on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (1:9) & received his prophetic revelation during this stay.

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Rev 2:1

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the words of him **who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands**: 2 I know your **deeds**, your hard **work** and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken your first love**. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! **Repent** and **do the things you did at first**. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. 6 But you have this in your favor: You **hate the practices** of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To **him who overcomes**, I will give **the right to eat from the tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.

Title: Rev 1:12-16

Jer 2:2 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem:

'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.'

Lk 11:41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,⁴² but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Nicolaitan = overcomes the people

Overcomes = nikon

Tree of Life- A promise of restoration

8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who **died and came to life again**. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty-yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you **are about to suffer**. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and **you will suffer persecution** for ten days. Be faithful, even to the **point of death**, and I will give you the **crown of life**. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes **will not be hurt at all by the second death**.

Title: Rev 1:17-18

John 8:42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Smyrna was the home of martyr Polycarp.

Stephanos- wreath for athletes or weddings.

Rev 20:14, 21:8 Second death = hell

12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the words of him who **has the sharp, double-edged sword**. 13 I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-where Satan lives. 14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you

Title: Rev 1:16

What made it such a stronghold? There are many different opinions. Some believe it is because Pergamos was a center of pagan religion, especially of "Asclepius Soter" or "Asclepius Savior. Some believe it was because Pergamos had a huge throne-like altar dedicated to the Roman god Zeus. Some believe it was because Pergamos was a center for the ancient Babylonian priesthood but this is tough to prove conclusively. Others believe it was because Pergamos was the political center of the worship-demanding Roman government.

Balak = destroyer

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also have those who hold **to the teaching** of the Nicolaitans. 16 **Repent** therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with **the sword of my mouth**. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give **some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it**.

Jn 6:49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Ancient courts gave defendants a white stone to prove they had been declared innocent.

18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, **whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze**. 19 I know your **deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance**, and that **you are now doing more than you did at first**. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to **repent** of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they **repent** of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that **I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds**. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, **I will give authority over the nations-**

Title: Rev 1:14-15

His title implies discernment and judgment.

Jezebel's time has come for judgment. Hopefully others will repent when they see her demise.

27'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'-
just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also **give him the morning star**. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rule = shepherd or feed.

Rev 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

Rev 3

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him **who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars**. I know your **deeds**; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. **3 Remember,**

Title: Rev 1:4,16

Jesus is holds heavens power and is over all the churches.

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therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. 4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will, like them, **be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.** 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the *churches*.

Other churches have a few troublemakers, here there are only a few faithful.

“As sin is expressed under the notion of nakedness, so holiness is expressed under the notion of a garment.” (Poole)

See “Book of Life” at end of lesson

7 **“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:** These are the words of him **who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.** 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars-I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, **I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.** 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 **Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.** 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Title: Rev 1:18

Isa 22:21 He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. ²² I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Many believe this is a reference to the church being taken away before God’s wrath is poured out in the tribulation period. It may also mean protection *through* it. See Rev 7:3

“Those who live on the earth” are mentioned 9 times in Rev and are always unbelievers.

We are to God’s temple and receive 3 names never known before.

14 **“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:** These are **the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.** 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm-neither hot nor cold-I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Title: Rev 1:5

2 Cor 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

The name Laodicea means “rule of the people.” This church well represents a church run by majority rule instead of God.

“Its name designates it as the Church of mob rule, the democratic Church, in which everything is swayed and decided by popular opinion, clamor and voting.”

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18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and **repent**. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, **I will come in and eat with him, and he with me**. 21 To him who overcomes, **I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne**. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

"We must not talk about setting the church right, we must pray for grace each one for himself, for the text does not say, 'If the church will open the door,' but 'If any man hear my voice and open the door.' It must be done by individuals: the church will only get right by each man getting right." (Spurgeon)

Song of Solomon 5:2 Listen! My lover is knocking: "Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one.

In his sermon "An Earnest Warning against Lukewarmness", Spurgeon described the lukewarm church:

- They have prayer-meetings, but there are few present, for they like quiet evenings home.
- When more attend the meetings they are still very dull, for they do their praying very deliberately and are afraid of being too excited.
- They are content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigor and zeal are considered to be vulgar.
- They may have schools, Bible-classes, preaching rooms, and all sorts of agencies; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them.
- They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion.
- The pastor does not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and he certainly has no flame of fire in his preaching.
- The pastor may be a shining light of eloquence, but he certainly is not a burning light of grace, setting men's hearts on fire.
- Everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not.
- Things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the skeptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all around.
- The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a Laodicean church has no notion of what that means.
- They are not so cold as to abandon their work, or to give up their meetings for prayer, or to reject the gospel.

"If they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance; but on the other hand they are neither hot for the truth, nor hot for conversions, nor hot for holiness, they are not fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to make Satan angry, nor fervent enough to make a living sacrifice of themselves upon the altar of their God. They are 'neither cold nor hot.'" (Spurgeon)

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The Book of Life

Blot out his name from the Book of Life: Does this mean that someone can lose their salvation? That someone is saved one day - their name is in the Book of Life - and another day, they have fallen away and their name has been blotted out from the Book of Life? We need to first see the context here in Revelation 3:5. The focus is assurance, so we should not think that names are being constantly erased and then re-written. The focus here is on assurance, not the idea that Jesus sits in heaven with a busy eraser. At the same time, we should carefully consider what the Word has to say about the Book of Life.

There is a Book of Life, and it will be opened and referenced on the Day of Judgment. This means that the Book of Life is real, and will be read.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (Revelation 20:12)

There is a Book of Life, and it determines if we go to heaven or hell. This means that the Book of Life is important. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

There is a Book of Life, and knowing our names are written there should bring us great joy.

Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. (Luke 10:20)

There is a Book of Life, and there are five different references to people being blotted out of the Book of Life. This means that the idea of being blotted out of the Book of Life should be taken seriously. Perhaps it is only a symbol, and that person's name was never there to begin with. Even if that is the case, the Lord still wants us to take it seriously, because there are some who by every human appearance are saved, yet will not be in heaven.

Moses said to the Lord: Yet now, if You will forgive their sin; but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written. (Exodus 32:32)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book." (Exodus 32:33)

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous. (Psalm 69:28)

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Revelation 3:5)

And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Revelation 22:19)

A good example of how we should take this warning seriously is the life of a man named Charles Templeton. A generation ago he was deeply involved in the foundations of Youth for Christ and impacted the nation for Jesus. Chuck Smith himself has said how dynamic and powerful a minister he was, and that he would go anywhere to hear him. Many people received Jesus at his meetings, and he was an associate with Billy Graham in the early years. But recently he wrote a book in which he totally denounces his belief in Jesus Christ, denounces even his belief even in God, and says he is an atheist. Charles Templeton totally denounces his early confessions of faith and through his book he wants to "rescue" the people he once brought to Jesus. Obviously, this man - in his present, apostate state - is not going to heaven. You can debate all day long if he was never saved or if he lost his salvation. But at the end of the day, there are two conclusions. First, at one time, by all human appearance he was saved. Second, he didn't take the warnings of the Bible to keep walking, to keep trusting, to keep persevering in the faith seriously enough.

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Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna

155 AD

i. The year after Polycarp returned from Rome, a great persecution came upon the Christians of Smyrna. His congregation urged him to leave the city until the threat blew over. So, believing that God wanted him to be around a few more years, Polycarp left the city and hid out on a farm belonging to some Christian friends. One day on the farm, as he prayed in his room, Polycarp had a vision of his pillow engulfed in flames. He knew what God said to him, and calmly told his companions “I see that I must be burnt at the stake.”

ii. Meanwhile, the chief of police issued a warrant for his arrest. They seized one of Polycarp’s servants and tortured him until he told them where his master was. Towards evening, the police chief and a band of soldiers came to the old farmhouse. When the soldiers found him, they were embarrassed to see that they had come to arrest such an old, frail man. But they reluctantly put him on a donkey and walked him back to the city of Smyrna.

iii. On the way to the city, the police chief and other government officials tried to persuade Polycarp to offer a pinch of incense before a statue of Caesar and simply say “Caesar is Lord.” That’s all he had to do, and he would be off the hook. They pleaded with him to do it, and escape the dreadful penalties. At first Polycarp was silent, but then he calmly gave them his firm answer: no. The police chief was now angry. Annoyed with the old man, he pushed him out of his carriage and onto the hard ground. Polycarp, bruised but resolute, got up and walked the rest of the way to the arena.

iv. The horrid games at the arena had already begun in earnest. A large, bloodthirsty mob had gathered to see Christians tortured and killed. One Christian named Quintis had boldly proclaimed himself a follower of Jesus and said he was willing to be martyred. But when he saw the vicious animals in the arena, he lost courage and agreed to burn that pinch of incense to Caesar as Lord. But another young man named Germanicus didn’t back down. He marched out and faced the lions, and died an agonizing death for his Lord Jesus Christ. Ten other Christians gave their lives that day, but the mob was unsatisfied. They cried out, “Away with the atheists who do not worship our gods!” To them, Christians were atheists because they did not recognize the traditional gods of Rome and Greece. Finally, the crowd started chanting “Bring out Polycarp.”

v. When Polycarp brought his tired body into the arena, he and the other Christians heard a voice from heaven. It said, “Be strong, Polycarp, play the man.” As he stood before the proconsul, they tried one more time to get him to renounce Jesus. The proconsul told Polycarp to agree with the crowd and shout out “Away with the atheists!” Polycarp looked sternly at the bloodthirsty mob, waved his hand towards them and said, “Away with those atheists!” The proconsul persisted. “Take the oath and revile Christ and I’ll set you free!” Polycarp answered, “For eighty-six years I’ve served Jesus; how dare I now revile my King?” The proconsul finally gave up, and announced to the crowd the crime of the accused: “Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian.”

vi. The crowd shouted, “let the lions loose.” But the animals had already been put away. The crowd then demanded that Polycarp be burnt. The old man remembered the dream about the burning pillow, and took courage in God. He said to his executioners, “It is well. I fear not the fire that burns for a season and after a while is quenched. Why do you delay? Come, do your will.”

v. They arranged a great pile of wood, and set up a pole in the middle. As they tied Polycarp to the pole, he prayed: “I thank You that You have graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Your Christ.” After he prayed and gave thanks to God, they set the wood ablaze. A great wall of flame shot up to the sky, but it never touched Polycarp. God had set a hedge of protection between him and the fire. Seeing that he would not burn, the executioner, in a furious rage, stabbed the old man with a long spear. Immediately, streams of blood gushed from his body and seemed to extinguish the fire. When this happened, witnesses say they saw a dove fly up from the smoke into heaven. At the very same moment, a church leader in Rome named Iraenus, said he heard God say to him, “Polycarp is dead.” God called his servant home.