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Charity Baptist Bible Institute

Advanced Church History Final Exam

Write a paper describing each of the seven different periods in the book of Revelation

There have been three general interpretations given to these Churches:

1. The first is historical. The Churches did exist.
2. The second is spiritual - The Churches represent seven different spiritual conditions that any particular congregation may be in at any specific time.
3. The third is prophetic. The Churches represent seven consecutive periods in the history of the Church. /* check this */

I) Ephesus (33-150 AD)

The Ephesus period runs from up to about 33-150AD. That's the early church, the first church period Ephesus is on the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was a port. In New Testament times it was in the part of the Roman Empire which was called 'Asia'. So while church history begins with the calling out of a local assembly of believers it must also begin with Rome. In other words, the New Testament local assembly of Bible believers was in direct conflict with the 'church state' of Rome, which was dominated by the 'whore' of Revelation 17.

Acts 18 to 20 tell how the church in Ephesus began and in Acts 20 there is the speech which Paul made to the leaders of the church in Ephesus. There is also a letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, as well as the two letters which Paul wrote to Timothy when he was in Ephesus. Then there is the message to Ephesus in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2:1-7) and the three letters from John may well have been sent to Ephesus. Many people think that John lived in Ephesus until he was a very old man. If so, John wrote his Gospel there.

The church at Ephesus spiritually pictures the first 100 years period of the early church's development. 'Ephesus' means fully purposed or desirable one. The letter to the church at Ephesus corresponds to that of the Apostolic, first-century church, from Pentecost until the death of the Apostle John, approximately 33-150 A.D. It is the only one of the seven letters that uses the word "apostles" (Revelation 2:2). Thus, Ephesus can be denominated the Apostolic Period, which began with the first local New Testament church called out in Matthew 10. John was the last remaining of the twelve apostles, Peter, Paul and the others were martyred thirty years or more prior to him.

The name 'Ephesus' means 'fully purposed or desirable one'. A Christian should be fully purposed. You can't defeat a Christian who's fully purposed. The congregation in Ephesus was established by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. Ephesus had been well known

throughout the world of for worship of Diana and Artemis, who was considered to be the mother goddess of the earth. Nevertheless the church at Ephesus was deeply spiritual and pure when it started out. It had great zeal and love for God.

In this letter God commends the Ephesus church for their hard work and perseverance in that they tested those who claim to be apostles but were not and found them false. There were many Jews who lived in Ephesus. Some of them were Christians. But some Jewish teachers had come to Ephesus with strange teaching. Timothy was at Ephesus when Paul wrote this letter to him (1 Timothy 1:3). In 1 Timothy 1 Paul writes about the false teachers in the church at Ephesus. This worried him. This was causing trouble in the church. In the Book of Acts Paul told them that false prophets would arise in their church and try to distort the true Gospel (Acts 20:29). Timothy was at Ephesus when Paul wrote this letter to him (1 Timothy 1:3). In 1 Timothy 1 Paul writes about the false teachers in the church at Ephesus.

The apostle Paul's farewell to the elders of literal Ephesus regarding this point revealed that the post-apostolic Church did indeed take this and other warnings like it to heart (Acts 20:29-31). Paul's warning is also echoed by the apostles Peter and John 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 4:1). These warnings recall THE words from THE Lord Himself (Matthew 7:16-20). This test of judging people by their fruits, given to us by Jesus Christ Himself, remains the standard by which we are to judge and evaluate any and all who purport to communicate the Word of God. We are advised by Him to do what the Ephesus Church did and make careful use of this test before accepting the teachings of any new individual or group.

God also commends the Ephesus church for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which God also hates. Nicolaitinism is a church system set up where there's ecclesiastical hierarchy that controls the people, sometimes called the clergy. This is was going on in the 1st century, but the true church was opposing that. God wants and expects us to develop a personal relationship with Him, not come to Him only through the church leaders. But before its all over with though the true church, because of their lack of love for their Saviour, eventually submits to that system.

But during the Ephesus period what was once 'desirable became backslidden, as those believers let go of their love for the Lord Jesus Christ and relaxed their fervency and devotion to Him. The love was missing from Ephesus church. They lost their first love, meaning, even though they were doing many of the right things, their true love for the Lord was beginning to grow cold.

The letter that God wrote to the Ephesians fits very closely to what happened in the Church during the time period of 33 A.D. to 100 A.D. After Jesus left His disciples, they began to carry out His commission to preach the Gospel and to establishing churches all over the Roman Empire. By 100 A.D., all the original apostles had died. But the churches they established and the leaders they built up continued the work of the Lord. But even from it's inception the Church struggled with false teachers and false doctrines, but that the Church held true and continued to grow in spite of the confusion and persecution. Some of the leadership of the church attempted to gain more authority and control similar to the Nicolaitans in Ephesus.

The Ephesus period represents a transition from direct apostolic rule to the rule of the local church. It begins with two significant events - the death of John, the last apostle and the fall of Jerusalem. In the case of the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the second temple marked the definite termination of the Mosaic ritual Law. From this point on the Church was now to focus on the truths of Christ to which the law had foreshadowed. Interestingly, miracles, which are associated with Apostles, are not recorded after Acts 28. The end of all apostolic rule and of the miracles and miraculous gifts meant that the Church would now have to become totally dependent upon the less spectacular procedure of administering the Word of God entirely through the Bible. The work of the Church, salvation and spiritual growth was now to be accomplished exclusively through ordinary Christians, who do not possess extraordinary gifts, such as healing, tongues, apostolic authority, or any other overtly miraculous means that the Church has spread the message of Jesus Christ and provided for its own growth. Instead the work would be done through evangelism, teaching, and pasturing. Success in the transitional era of Ephesus, therefore, would depend upon individual Christians redoubling their efforts in the Word of God.

There were signs from even before the start of the Ephesus period that there would be problems with the transition from apostolic to local church rule. Paul's complaints to the Jerusalem congregation, to the Corinthians are examples which gave the appearance that Peter's hopes for the post-apostolic Church were too optimistic.

Ideally, the Church would have increased their efforts in the Word of God after the apostles' departure and the departure of the miraculous gifts. They would have called to remembrance their teachings, as Peter hoped they would. But despite their efforts to combat sinful influences, the personal teachings of the apostles were largely lost almost immediately.

The conclusion regarding the Ephesus period of the Church is that those who employ the early Church for authority instead of relying exclusively upon what the Bible says should consider that the Bible comes directly from the Lord. Even in John's day and immediately after it the so-called apostolic fathers were not paying the attention to the Bible and its teachings that they should have. Following the departure Paul, Peter and John, Church progress declined and they failed to continue to grow in the Word (their first love).

2) Smyrna (150-325AD)

The Smyrna period runs from up to about 150-325AD. Smyrna is probably the most persecuted church of all of them in the sense of the Church Age. In fact, the word 'Smyrna' in Greek means 'myrrh' (the Bible embalming fluid). That, in itself, speaks of trouble. This is a poverty stricken church, persecuted by the world. The Smyrna Church was a faithful church that had to deal with false Christians and they would have suffer persecution and a 'ten day' tribulation (Revelation 2:10). To apply it historically to this period of time it just so happens that during the time of the 1st 2 churches here - the Ephesus and the Smyrna periods - there were 10 Roman imperial persecutions started by Nero. That could be what the reference of 10 days is. It certainly isn't 10 days. It's probably the 10 imperial persecutions. One of the

persecutions by the emporor Domition lasted exactly 10 years, which would make one day stand for a year and in Daniel's system of the 70 weeks of years that could apply. But no commentary ever knew what he meant by 'have tribulation ten days'.

In this 'tribulation' the world takes everything from them. Rome takes their property, their lives, and their children from them. There's never been a church in church history as persecuted as this. The persecutions last and there's a lot of them even later on. But later on the church itself becomes very apostate. The Bible is being corrupted. During the church period of Smyrna, around 185AD, Origen began to corrupt the Scriptures. He began to rewrite and rearrange the Old and the New Testaments. He studied 'scientifically'. He stated that one needed to be baptized to be saved, that if you study you can gain Adam's image, and that the sun was not made on the 4th day.

From 100-325AD most of the 10 imperial persecutions take place. Nero starts them pretty decisively in 67AD. He was the sixth emperor of Rome. Rome was set on fire under his orders. He blamed his behavior on Christians so he had a 'reason' to attack them. Some were sown up in skins, dressed up in skirts of wax and burned to illuminate his garden. Domitian 81 AD carried out the second cruel persecution. Some Roman Senators were put to death, John was banished to Patmos. Christians were blamed for everything. People were turned in for the reward were killed. Christians were required to take an oath. Nicodemus suffered at Rome at this time. Timothy was killed. In the seventh peregution under Decius in 249 AD Peter beheaded for not sacrificing to the goddess Venus.

These persecutions led to a situation that determined the course of the local assseblies for the next 1500 years. They led to a situation where there was a 'super reverence' for spiritual leaders who suffered martyrdom, which led to behavior that was akin to idolatry. One could pretend to be associated with these men either by 'apostolic succession' or 'laying on of hands'. This is the type of behavior that manifested the 'Pauline Obsession', where Paul is thought of as beyond the work of his ministry. It is the peculiar attitude in which Paul's works are approached. He is made into an academic theologion. Analogously, Apostate Popes at Rome pretended that they were kin to the martyrs like Paul who suffered and died for resisting the church state.

Although the preaching is what should be what is stressed, at this time men also are beginning to place too much of an emphasis on church hierarchy. It starts out in the 1st century where Papias begins to put too much emphasis on the pastor as a bishop and the head of a city and all of the churches in it. Eventually that leads to the Pope of Rome and the Roman Catholic system corrupting the Scriptures. Those corrupt Scriptures begin to infiltrate in the churches.

At this time there is a group that blasphemes by saying that they are Jews when they really are not. The implication here is post-millennialism. It's a church or a group saying that they're the real, true Jews and all of God's blessings are on them and that God's through w the Old Testament Jew. This is the doing away w the premillennial system where God's going to reinstate and resurrect the Jews. Instead this is that system where the church becomes Israel spiritually. Thus, Christ considers the Smyrna church to be the 'synagogue of Satan' (Revelation 2:9). This is just a religious Satanic system that attempts to duplicate God's church or God's promises. Here somebody is saying they're Jews when they're not. It's somebody trying to take the promises to the nation of Israel and apply these promises to themselves. It's the Roman Catholic Church trying to apply the Old Testament promises to the church.

Jesus is saying (Revelation 2:9) that He knows the Jews are lying about the people of Smyrna. There was a group of Jews dedicated to the destruction of Christianity. They would spread stories about Christians to the Romans. The Romans would then use the stories against the Christians. God was telling this church that these people were not Jews, but they only appeared to be. In their hearts they were evil and held Satan as their leader. The ruination of the economy was blamed upon the Christians. People began to be saved causing their visits to the temples of Baal to cease and they no longer paid tribute to the goddess Diana. The temple became a place of commerce.

The According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and other early sources, it was the Church of Smyrna that was first referred to as the ‘Catholic Church’. Here is what The Catholic Encyclopedia itself teaches:

“The combination "the Catholic Church" (*he katholike ekklesia*) is found for the first time in the letter of St. Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, written about the year 110. The words run: "Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be, even as where Jesus may be, there is the *universal* [*katholike*] Church." However, in view of the context, some difference of opinion prevails as to the precise connotation of the italicized word...by the beginning of the fourth century it seems to have almost entirely supplanted the primitive and more general meaning...The reference (c. 155) to "the bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna" (Letter on the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, xvi), a phrase which necessarily presupposes a more technical use of the word, is due, some critics think, to interpolation...”

- Thurston H. Catholic. Transcribed by Gordon A. Jenness. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume III. Published 1908. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Nihil Obstat, November 1, 1908. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York.

Regarding Polycarp, after the second fall of Jerusalem in 135 A.D., it became more universally recognized that the successor of the Apostle John was Polycarp of Smyrna. Polycarp of Smyrna was unique among any claimed to be a direct successor to any of the apostles. He is the only possible second century direct apostolic successor considered by any Church. According to Tertullian, Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenaeus reports that the apostles appointed Polycarp as the overseer of the Church in Smyrna: Irenaeus records this about Polycarp:

“But Polycarp **also** was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna...always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time.”

- Irenaeus. *Adversus Haereses*. Book III, Chapter 4, Verse 3 and Chapter 3, Verse 4).

The theme of eternal life victorious over death is evident in every part of the message to Smyrna. Christ describes Himself as the One ‘*the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive*’ (Revelation 2:8). The believers of Smyrna are told to be ‘*faithful unto death*’ and the reward for their continued endurance is the promised a ‘*crown of life*’ (Revelation 2:10). Finally, the victorious one ‘*shall not be hurt of the second death*’ (Revelation 2:11). The focus

upon eternal life triumphing over mere physical death for true followers of Jesus Christ was crucial for those of the Smyrna period of the Church, for this period represents the era of intense persecution of the Church by the Roman state. Polycarp, following this teaching, stood fast to the doctrines of the Bible, and fought a variety of heretics in Rome. Even in the face of death, he refused to compromise. Polycarp wrote and told the church at Smyrna:

“Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, and being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one.”

(Polycarp. Letter to the Philippians, Chapter X. From ‘*Ante-Nicene Fathers*’, Volume 1’, as edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885).

Polycarp was finally stabbed to death after several unsuccessful attempts to burn him.

The believers of Smyrna had a difficult time from almost every worldly point of view. Christianity, originally poorly understood by Roman bureaucracy, soon came to be distinguished from Judaism, which became a form of worship condoned by the state. This is a rich church yet God said they’re poor (Revelation 2:9). They were rich in spiritual things, rich in Christ. They might have been poor in the things of earth, but not in the things of God. But the Bible is being corrupted at this time. There is a group that blasphemes by saying they’re Jews and are not. The implication here is post-millennialism.

3) Pergamus (325-500AD)

‘Pergamos’ means: a wealth marriage. It come comes from two Greek words, ‘Per’ which means abundance, and “gamos” which means marriage. Pergamos was an ancient Greek city near the west coast of Asia Minor in present-day Turkey. It was about: 15 miles East of the Aegean Sea, 45 miles NE of Smyrna, and 40 miles NW of Thyatira.

Clarence Larkin speaking of Satan’s Throne wrote that ‘Pergamos was spoken as ‘Satan’s Seat.’ The Pergamus period can be characterized by the end of the separation between church and state and therefore the original purpose for the church disappears as well. This is the Pergamus period (Revelation 2:12). In Pergamus the world came into the church. ‘Pergamus’ indicates a marriage between the world and the church. It is like a woman that was once married to one husband now becoming a harlot. It is the picture of the harlot of Revelation 17. Pergamus is the church marrying the world and what happens then is a church-state religion where church and state are put together (like any Roman Catholic country of today). Here the Roman Catholic Church entered into a union with the State. It was during this Church Period that the Catholic Nicolaitan-Balaamite Churches joined hands in ‘marriage’ with the Roman Empire and became its Babylonian harlot, the State Religion of the Roman Empire. It became evident that the Catholic Church united in an unholy marriage with the Pagan Roman Empire.

In the 4th century Constantine introduced the Edict of Milan, which made Christianity legal and ultimately the official religion of the Empire. The Persians had a Babylonian religion as well. With the fall of Babylon Attalus, the head of all Babylonian religion moved headquarters of the religion to his newly established city, Pergamos. He exalted himself to the status of god-king of the Pergomite dynasty. About 133 B.C. Attalus III died without an heir to the throne. He willed the entire Pergomite dynasty to the Roman Empire. No one wore the Pergomite crown until 63 B.C. So the Babylonian religions, now headquartered in Pergamus, were merged into Christianity and pagan festivals became Christian holidays. The Feasts of Saturnalia and Ishtar became Christmas and Easter.

Julius Caesar wanted to become dictator and emperor of the Roman Empire for life. He also wanted the titles and rights of the Pergomite dynasty given to him. He wanted to become the Maximus Pontifex. He was granted the right to wear the Pergomite crown, but he did not live to see any benefits from that right. A few of his associates killed him. As they were stabbing him to death, Octavian took the crown Julius Caesar would have worn. Octavian now became the Maximus Pontiff. He became the living god. Every emperor after him wore the crown.

Pergamos became the first city in Asia (29 AD) with a temple for Emperor-Worship, that is, a temple to worship the Roman Emperor Augustus Octavius Caesar. In fact, in this city three temples were built to the Roman Emperors, in which the Emperors were worshipped as gods. Pergamos was an extremely idolatrous city and it was filled with many pagan temples to pagan gods. Therefore, it was definitely one of the greatest political and religious centers in Asia. In fact, the idolatrous spirit in that city was so great that many of Jews who lived there, and there was a large number of them, became heretics and assimilated the Greek Religion into Judaism, just as the Catholic Church did before it became the State Religion of the Roman Empire. Bergama is the modern-day name of Pergamos today.

In 313 AD, some of God's bishops and ministers apostatized by joining hands with the priests of Catholicism and became Catholics. The Catholic Church then joined hands in marriage with the Pagan Roman Empire. Emperor Constantine chose Catholicism, as he desired a united empire. The empire Constantine inherited was a divided empire with many different political and religious factions and he wanted the empire united in one religion. In Catholicism he saw a religion that he could control. It was also a plus for him that Catholicism even went under the name of 'Christianity' at this time. When Constantine gave the Edict of Milan in 313 AD he had exempted the clergy of the Catholic Church from the municipal senate of ancient Rome, who ran local government and other burdens, giving them privileges already enjoyed by some of the heathen priests and teachers. But the relief was great enough to cause an ungodly rush for holy Orders into Catholic Balaamite Christianity. Money and power has always been the prime motivating factor behind all that Catholicism has accomplished for centuries.

Christ was now not visible in the Pergamos church. People were no longer receiving a Christian message. Christ's doctrinal teachings became ritual and ceremony. The influence of paganism in Pergamos increased yearly. The church began to shroud itself in mystery and rituals bearing resemblance to Babylonian mysticism. Celibacy of the priests and nuns, which has no scriptural basis, was invented. Other doctrines the church instituted in this time period

starting in 300AD were making prayers for the dead, making the sign of the cross, the worship of saints and angels, the institution of mass, the worship of Mary, priests dressing differently than the laymen- 526 A.D.- the doctrine of extreme unction, the doctrine of purgatory and prayers directed to Mary. All of these, of course, are non-Biblical doctrines.

These are all elements of an overall picture of the way in which the Pergamus period developed. In the previous period of Smyrna the Lord didn't give any reproof for the believers, who withstood the fire of persecution. This is the beginning of a trend toward a growing acceptance of false elements within the Church, which was to gather momentum. The end of the era of Smyrna started a process of corruption that would eventually result in the complete spiritual death of the true Church. The council of Nicaea, which initiated the Pergamus church period in 325AD (Revelation 2:12) and marked the end of New Testament Bible Christianity, as found in the New Testament, at least in the effectiveness of that type of Christianity.

By 325AD the main issue in the body of Christ no longer had anything to do with substances and essences. The 'sore point' was now water baptism. In these days of the Nicene fathers the issues that were keeping the empire in an 'uproar' were adult water baptism, discipline and purity in the local church and the theological position of the local church concerning the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. This was proof that a 'Catholic orthodoxy' which had problems. But nothing was ironed out in the council of Nicaea.

In the Pergamos age paganism infiltrated Rome through the Pergamos church. Julius Caesar asked to be Pontifex Maximus in 33 B.C. making him the god king of the Babylonian worship system passed from Caesar to Caesar. In 376 A.D. Emperor Gratian (he was in the line of Constantine) refused to wear the pagan crown because of the influence of Christianity. The crown laid idle for two years until Damascus the Bishop of Bishops decided he would wear it. In 378 A.D. the head of the Christian church in Rome became the worldwide head of the pagan mysteries. These mysteries became mixed and interspersed with Christian doctrine until they could hardly be told apart. The heart of Catholicism came to be Babylonian worship. In the Pergamos Church Period, it was Roman Catholic Emperors and Kings of Europe who persecuted God's people to preserve and unify this pagan Catholic Religion and Empire. In the end God sent plagues on the Emperors of the Roman Empire and the Kings of Europe in the Pergamos Church Period for their role in the marrying of the church with the world.

4) Thyatira (500-1000AD)

'Thyatira' means suffering, odor of affliction. The Thyatira church suffers spiritually, doctrinally and physically. This is where real Christianity just about gets wiped out. The principal deity of the city was Apollo, worshipped as the Sun-god under the surname Tyrimnas. A shrine outside the walls was dedicated to Sambatha, a sibyl. It was a center of activity by the Nicolaitans with their idolatry and licentiousness under a false "prophetess."

Another temple at Thyatira was dedicated to Sambethe, and at this shrine was a prophetess, who is thought to represent the Jezebel of Rev 2:20.

“Another superstition, of an extremely curious nature, which existed at Thyatira, seems to have been brought thither by some of the corrupted Jews of the dispersed tribes. A fane [temple] stood outside the walls, dedicated to Sambatha--the name of the sibyl who is sometimes called Chaldean, soometimes Jewish, sometimes Persian--in the midst of an inclosure designated 'the Chaldean's Court.’”

Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, 1872.

The Roman Catholic Church begins to just take over so predominately that they outlaw other churches and other beliefs. They claim to be the one true church and anything else is heresy. This power it used to set up a church state system; a religious system under the name of Jezebel, which seduces God's people to commit spiritual fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. Again it's the mixing true faith or true belief with paganism. Since Jezebel herself has been dead 700-800 years by the time Revelation was written, her name is used to *represent* the Baalite system of the Old Testament. Before it's all over with Israel is involved deeply in Baalism and the worship of Baal and Ashteroth. Jezebel brought about that seduction of the people of God, the Northern kingdom of Israel, in the Old Testament. At this time Israel was divided into two nations. The upper or northern part was still called Israel, but the lower or southern part was named Judah. Jezebel's daughter married the king of Judah and imported the same paganism. Because of what Jezebel did the northern tribes became the lost tribes and were scattered by the Assyrians.

The term Jezebel is used symbolically, referring to the literal Jezebel, who was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. He was formerly a priest of Astarte, who had made his way to the throne by murdering his predecessor Pheles. Ahab's marriage with Jezebel was the first instance of a marriage with a pagan princess of a king of the northern kingdom of Israel and this alliance was a turning point in the moral history of the kingdom. Ahab served Baal, and worshipped him and did more to provoke God to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him because Jezebel, his wife, stirred him up” (1Kings 16:29-33). Because Ahab ruled as king, this vile woman Jezebel was able to seduce many into Baal worship.

Jezebel stands out in Israel's history as the person who lead them the furtherest away from God. Before Jezebel the ten northern tribes had yielded to idolatry in the worship of the calves, although the true God was still worshipped and the law of Moses was acknowledged. Jezebel changed all of that. She was a powerful woman and her husband, Ahab, was weak, allowing her to dominate him, his throne and his kingdom. She was ruthless in her ungodliness, in her worship of Baal and Astarte or Ashtaroht. Jezebel was guilty of *whoredom* and *witchcraft* (1Kings 16:31, 2Kings 9:22). She sought to drive out the worship of God from Israel. This woman was not a real prophetess, but a false one.

Now God uses her here in Revelation 2 to describe the New Testament system that Satan is using again to destroy true Christianity. The Thyratyra church period is a period of rapid acceleration of the apostate sys and therefore this Jezebel system, which is mixed with Baalism, seduces God's servants to commit fornication. During the period of Thyratyra there were great plagues on the face of the earth, especially the Bubonic and the black death. There were plagues that killed literally millions of people on the continent of Europe and in other places. Thus, this period begins the period known as 'The Dark Age'.

Darkness was spiritually gathering over the Church at this time. The Thyatira church period is characterized by the Popes (Luciferian Roman Catholic Popes attempting to preserve and unify the Holy Roman Empire) giving Imperial Edicts that established the Inquisitions for the purpose of persecuting and destroying God's people as heretics. These people were not only persecuted by the Catholic Inquisition but also by the Protestant Inquisition. This all resulted in the torture and murder of men, women, children (even babies). This may have been what the sun-god Tyrimnos in Thyatira represented. Tyrimnos' image on their coins was a *horseman*, bearing a double-headed battle ax. In other words, one side of the head of the battle-ax represented persecution from the Catholic Inquisition and the other side represented persecution from the Protestant Inquisition. Tyrimnos is probably another name of the sun-god Baal. Thus, the name 'Thyatyra' in part means 'affliction' (here in the physical sense of the word).

The Thyratira church period exhibits the greatest departure from 'the faith which was once delivered to the saints' of any church period in church history. While individual Christians in the Thyatira period were still preaching the truth, it was based on some of the sermons that were being preached in the period of darkness was arriving. Preachers like Chrysostom's New Testament preaching was sometimes absurd. For example, his messages ignored the 'Pericope de Adultera (John 7:53-8:11), indicating a prejudice against the word of God in at least *one* area. Jerome didn't have the sense to get a Greek Receptus of the New Testament from Antioch of Syria, as God will send nothing through Rome but corruption. The true word of God found in the dark ages do not come from anywhere near Rome.

The name 'Thyatira' also means 'continual sacrifice'. The Mass was the centerpiece of the Thyatira church. Even to this day, the sacrifice of the Mass is a continual ordinance within the Catholic Church. The bread represented the body of the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. The Catholic view is the bread is a real Christ. The offering of the Mass is to crucify Jesus on a daily basis for the sins of man. 'Mass' in Latin means 'good gift'. The gift is the eucharist or sacrament. The eucharist according to Catholic theology literally turns into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, whenever the sacrifice of the Mass is observed by Catholics, it represents a continual sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The danger in the 'doctrine' is that it turns one's focus away from Christ and towards suffering saints and ultimately to the practice of idolatry by worshiping and praying to these saints. The Catholic Church began the process of canonization of dead saints in 995 AD and Christ condemned both the Pergamos and Thyatira church period for this idolatry.

Jesus Christ praised the Thyatira church for its love, faith, service and perseverance. However, the church had tolerated the teachings of a false prophetess named Jezebel. The literal Jezebel's sin was leading Israel into idolatry. Although the majority of the church at Thyatira did not follow 'Jezebel's' teaching the church still apparently allowed this group's teaching to continue within its midst. The dark ages were clearly now under way.

5) Sardis (1000-1500AD)

Sardis was an ancient Greek city in the western part of Asia Minor in present-day Turkey. It was about 45 miles east of Smyrna and the *Aegean Sea*, 30 miles southeast of Thyatira, and 30 miles northwest Philadelphia. It was located at the base of Mount Tmolus. Sardis was leveled by an earthquake in 17AD. It was later rebuilt by Tiberius Caesar.

Sardis means 'red ones'. Sardis runs from 1000-1500AD, where the reformation begins. The reason there is a break at 1000AD is because that is when the great schism or split in the Roman Catholic church occurs. This is where the Roman Catholic church parts company with the eastern orthodox (the Greek orthodox) church. Half of the Roman Catholic church goes in one direction and the other half goes in the other direction. In the book of Daniel that Roman kingdom is described as the two legs of an image. That is exactly what happens. The Roman part of this image becomes two legs and it has been that way ever since. There is the Greek Eastern Orthodox church and the Roman Catholic church. The two are the result of the split that occurs in 1000AD. The Roman Catholic church was far the more powerful of the two. Thyatira and Sardis cover about 1000 yrs of time, which is referred to as the Dark Ages, from 500-1500BC. There's not much good to say about either one of them. The Thyatira church was seduced by the 'Jezebel' system, a Satanic system, which has seduced the church and committed fornication with the kings of the earth. By the time of the Sardis period the Bible was chained to the pulpit, Bible believers were persecuted. The doors of any other kind of church were shut and they didn't let anybody worship any differently than they did.

This is the dead church (Revelation 3:1). From 1000-1500AD the church in itself isn't much. Their first doctrinal error is that they do not believe in the literal return of Christ. Many of them are Amillennialists. It was taught by a large portion of the Sardis type churches that all churches will unite and that their combined efforts will bring the Kingdom of God to earth. Their preachers told the people the Rapture is not going to happen. But when it in fact does, Jesus Christ will come upon them like a thief in the night and they won't be prepared because of this flaw in their doctrine. Jesus Christ said basically that even though their teaching was faulty there were still people in the church living right (Revelation 3:4). In spite of the rejection of Christ's return there were still those who truly loved God and were living holy lives.

However, there were some men in this period of time that were great men who didn't get fouled up with Rome, even at that some of them were Roman. Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Savanah Roller (a Catholic priest but he was a Bible believer and he was a preacher.). They stood for the truth and they knew what was right. They believed the Bible and because of that many of them were martyred for what they believed.

In order for the Reformation to happen people had to deny Roman Catholicism. When people disagreed with Rome the Romans declared them to be heretics, stripped them of their garments, dressed them in burlap sacks, crowned them with paper crowns of demons, denounced them before heaven and cast them into hell. But Jesus said if they overcame those things He would not denounce them, but rather He would confess them before His Father (Revelation 3:4) and they would be clothed in white raiment (Revelation 3:5).

During the 'Dark Ages' period, in 800AD, a man named Charlemagne became the first Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas day 800AD. He allowed himself to be crowned by the Pope. That is when the Roman Catholic church really begins to take over Europe and the crown heads

of Europe. He was succeeded by his son Louis the Pious. From that point on almost every king and emperor in Europe has to be crowned by the Pope before he can actually become the head of that system. Eventually the kingdoms of Europe selected an emperor, who was also under the Pope. This all takes place between 500 and 1500AD. That is the zenith of the Roman Catholic system and it's the darkness of the world. Pious was a devout religious figure, but no warrior. He divided the empire among his sons, but they (Lothair, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German) fought among themselves. Finally, the Holy Roman Empire was partitioned by Treaty of Verdun in 843 into the Western, Middle and Eastern Frankish Kingdoms.

During this period the St. Bartholomew massacre took place. There were great persecutions against the Waldenzians, the Albigensians, the Paulicians, the different Bible believing groups that tried to exist during this period. People were persecuted and killed. The blood of Martyrs ran 'red' in the streets. Fittingly, Sardis means 'red ones'.

The centralization of power under Charlemagne as the Holy Roman Emperor produced peace that allowed trade, agriculture and other non-military activities to resume and even flourish. During this period, known as the Carolingian Renaissance, Charlemagne promoted Christian literacy and learning among the Catholic clergy and some nobles. For instance, the Venerable Bede (673-735) wrote a scientific history of England and created the "Anno Domini" system of dates, using Jesus' birth as a beginning point.

The only Biblical light that continued to shine in the darkness of the Sardis church period were the Biblical 'offspring' of people such as the Priscillians and the Euchites. These people accepted the Bible as final authority, they rejected the Roman Catholic mass and they attempted to uphold a separation of church and state.

As we initially mentioned, in contrast to the four preceding eras, the *entire* organization of the visible church is now in a state of severe corruption, so severe, that it can only be described as being "dead". The red color associated with the church of Sardis corresponds with the idea of sinfulness (Isaiah 1:18). In contrast to the 'living stones' mentioned in 1 Peter .2:4-5, she is instead a dead stone whose red color betrays her true spiritual state. Sardis therefore represents the further degeneration of the visible church, which had begun over 1,000 years ago. What had started as an infiltration of church organization in Pergamus, progressed to a domination of its hierarchy in Thyatira, by the time of Sardis had permeated virtually the entire visible church to the extent that, apart from a remnant of true followers of Christ, there was at this point almost nothing "Christian" about the 'Christian church'. At this point in church history Jesus Christ was no longer the primary object of worship. His teachings were no longer the standard. Statues, saints, rituals and things that had similar effect had obscured the fact that salvation is through faithfully following Him alone, His teachings and the written Word.

6) Philadelphia (1500-1900AD)

'Philadelphia' means brotherly love. There's more love in this church period than any other church period. The Philadelphia church was separating herself from moral and spiritual corruption (being "holy") and instead was taking a stand via the truth against the false dogma that had come to dominate the church (being "true"). Thus in The Lord Jesus Christ uses these two words to describe Himself and His own character (Revelation 3:7). This can be extrapolated to conclude the Christ identifies with and approves the difficult course undertaken by Philadelphia in her separation from the sinful and false traditional church of her day. In other words, He is the truth, so that we must speak the truth. He is holy, so we must be holy as well. This is the best church of all the seven churches of Revelation.

The Philadelphia period is the church of the open door. Historically the open door was a reference to an important pass through the mountains between the Hermus and Meander valleys. Philadelphia was the 'keeper of the key' to this door, or gateway of the eastern highlands. City officials had the power to open and close this door as they willed. Through this portal passed the mail, trade and commerce of the west to the wide regions of central and eastern Lydia. But in our more important context of the Philadelphia church period the spiritual meaning of an open door is it is an opportunity to preach. In the tribulation there will be some preaching going on.

England by and large goes into apostasy as far as their belief of the Bible in 1880 when they reject the text of the King James Bible. America follows suit in 1901-1903. In 1901 America prints the American Standard Version. By 1903 most of the foreign Bible societies or the Bible societies that have been printing Bibles for the foreign missionary field at that point reject the King James Bible. After this period ends in 1900 there is real deterioration in Church history. There are very few revivals after 1900 and from this point on mission fields don't open. Rather they begin one by one to close.

All of the other churches came into being because *someone else* opened a door for them. For example, Constantine opened the door for the Pergamos church. He proclaimed Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire. Because of that whole armies were marched down to rivers and baptized as Christians. The door to the Thyatira church was opened by a powerful Pope, who put marched armies into countries, conquered them and put people to the sword if they would not be Roman Catholic. However the church of Philadelphia was given, by Jesus Christ, the key of David, which opened its doors. The key of David is mentioned only in one other Scripture, Isaiah 22:20-25. Eliakim, a steward over King Hezekiah's household, was given the key of David and with it the authority to open and close the door of the King's treasure house. In context of the Philadelphia church the key of David opened its doors spiritually. Historically, this key the opened the door through which Israel will receive the kingdom. They started coming back to the land. One day they're going to get that kingdom and the sure mercies of David. There's a Zionist movement in early 1900's and by the time one gets to World War I and the Balfour Declaration. There is a lot of movement towards Israel, so the actual beginning of the Jewish people going back to the land takes place right at the end of the Philadelphia period.

This is the period of the King James Bible and no other period will come close to it as far as revivals and the reformation. There are very few revivals after 1900. But at the start of this period there are about 150 countries on the earth, there are the great

world missions and the growth of churches is unparalleled. Up until 1900 one sees worldwide missions, and tremendous church growth. John Wesley begins the Methodist movement in England, which keeps the country from revolution. He did it through the preaching of the King James Bible.

This church period starts with the reformation, Martin Luther and a break away from the Catholic Church, challenging it on its false doctrines. It ends with the Protestant Church's beginnings of moving back to Rome via the Vaticanus text of Rome. So what started out with the reformer leaving Rome or trying to reform it ends up with the first steps back to Rome. That is essentially where the Church is at the present time.

The Philadelphia period represents the era of revival that began with the Reformation in the sixteenth century, was followed by the spread of true Christianity during the seventeenth century, the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century and the growth of genuine Christianity in the nineteenth century. This period represents a complete turn around. Philadelphia thus personifies a rising from the dead condition of the church of Sardis. Historically speaking, the era of Philadelphia was a commendable one in terms of the quantity and quality of its evangelism and intensity with which it sought God's truth through the Holy Scriptures.

In the Philadelphia church period it is the pure unadulterated word of God that is being 'published' by a the church that kept its word (Revelation 3:8). Not denying His name (Revelation 3:8) means that they kept His doctrine pure, proclaimed that He is holy, He was born of a virgin, He is incarnate;, He died and rose again. When Christ opens a door for a people they can then get these truths out effectively.

Philadelphia was a revival church. The city of Philadelphia was famous for many earthquakes, which required them to rebuild. A revival really is knocking down the old city and building a new one. When revival happens it takes one's old, sin-hardened heart and knocks it down. A person becomes renewed in the Holy Spirit. This is what kept Philadelphia fresh and new.

With the Philadelphia church period the way was now clear for the preproduction of a Bible in the end time. The book translated by a king (Ecclesiastes 8:4) could now reach the ends of the earth. The door of the Philadelphia church was open to make this possible and the commission given to Bible believers in Acts 1 and 2 Corintjians 5 could no be fulfilled. A Bible that contained the pure word of God could now be introduced to the world. The key that opened the doors of the world to the preaching of the Gospel was the restoration of the God-given, God honored, God preserved text of the Holy Bible on a worldwide scale.

7) Laoedecia (1900AD – End of the Church Age)

The Laodicean church is last church of the Church Age period, occurring right before the Second Coming, right before the Rapture (Revelation 4:1). 'Laodicean' is a compound Greek word meaning 'the rights of the common people'. This is the opposite of the situation of Nicolaitanism, where the priesthood rules. The Reformation against Nicolaitanism was so powerful that political rule in both government and the church swung to the opposite extreme. Hence, the Laodicean church is ruled by a democracy of the people in contrast to the autocracy of the priesthood in the Thyatira church period. A lukewarm church with individualism and church splits can result from this situation.

Laodicea was situated along the banks of a river and stood at the junction of three great roads traversing Asia Minor. The city where the church was founded got its name from Antiochus II (Antiochus Theos), who built it. Antiochus assumed the name 'Theos' after conquering some of Ptolemy Philadelphus' people. Ptolemy Philadelphus had much in common with the Philadelphian church, a church which kept the Word of God as its strength. The redeeming quality of Philadelphus was that he set the Jews in his kingdom free. He paid their masters silver in exchange for their freedom. The name of Ptolemy's father was Ptolemy Soter. Soter means "a deliverer, God, or Christ Savior." This made Philadelphus a type of son of God who would save and deliver. It is from him the Antichrist (Antiochus) stole.

When Antiochus came before the conquered people they began to worship him like he was a god, calling him 'Theos'. He liked the sound of it and assumed the title as his personal name. He named the church after his wife Laodice, whose name in Greek is Laodikeia. Interestingly, Antiochus means "against" or "instead of" and 'Theos' is the Greek word for God. Together his name means "instead of God" or "Antichrist." So Laodice was, in a spiritual sense, married to Antichrist and the Laodicean church ends up married to Antichrist since Jesus promised to spew her out, she will not go in the Rapture of the church unless she repents.

The location of the city was conducive to commercial enterprise, hence it prospered as a large industrial administrative center specializing in banking, textile manufacturing and medicine. Laodicea's economy was fueled by a textile industry that manufactured from the wool of black sheep. The early Laodicean church was thus a rich church.

This church operates within the framework of a humanistic value system, humanistic reason, humanistic worship. That's all this business of the civil rights era of this present time. The attempt to merge the races in the world today goes against God's intention of putting the races in various places that they might find Him (Acts 17). Merging the races into the same locations brings about the idea of equal rights. But since this great civil rights movement started and with all the great mass transportation Christianity has, in fact, suffered. Less people are now getting saved.

The Laodicean church is neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:15). Evidently there will be a church in the tribulation that will also be a lukewarm church like Laodicea. God does not like a lukewarm church (Revelation 3:16). Here God can't 'spew' the Christian out of His mouth, so it can't be doctrinally applied to us. But a tribulation church or tribulation individuals who are lukewarm and who takes the mark of the beast or who don't keep the word of God are going to make God sick and God can spew them out.

Just as the first century church at Laodicea of Asia Minor was wealthy, the Laodicean church of today is also rich, literally rich. However, they rob church members of money,

missions of money when they ought to be putting money into souls and into trying to win people, trying to send missionaries. God is raising up missionaries all over the place and churches think they're doing God a favor if they support a few missionaries. There are many missionaries that need help. God is raising missionaries up because the church is able to support them.

None of the characteristics of Christ, such as holy and true (Revelation 3:7) apply to Laodicean church period. Instead there exists new set of characteristics, which condemn the Laodicean church period. The Laodicean people's rights church is lukewarm toward Jesus Christ, who died to make atonement for their sin. Revelation 3:17 describes the characteristics that make The Laodicean church lukewarm and complacent. They are stupid and ignorant just like the Corinthian church was. Although this church is rich materially, proud of its wealth and even bragging about it, too often when Christ is consulted it's to assist in creating wealth rather than a spiritual matter. Much emphasis is placed on creating wealth, but the works of the Laodicean Christians are lukewarm and indifferent toward evangelism and missions.

Not only does the wealth of this church detract from its spiritual concerns, there is also problem of the self-confidence material abundance can produce. But material abundance is not conducive to spiritual vitality. People tend to believe they can accomplish some significant things *without* the aid of Jesus Christ, who says that without Him you can do nothing (John 15:5). Finally wealth causes the Laodicean church to become self-righteous (Revelation 3:17). This is a condition where people worry about not having enough wealth. As previously mentioned, the Laodicean church robs its members and its missions of the money when they ought to be putting money into souls and into trying to win people, trying to send missionaries.

Recent surveys of the Laodicean church reveal its spiritual condition. It was reported that only 15% of Christians read their Bible and pray daily. Another survey revealed that Christians place a higher value on their lifestyle than on their church. Another recent survey states that most U.S. Christians do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a living entity and more than one-22% of Americans strongly agreed that Jesus Christ sinned when He lived on earth. So, in today's church there is surely a drastic change from the fiery Philadelphia church, who loved Jesus Christ to the lukewarm Laodicean church. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 offers a clue to the cause of this situation. The Laodicean church no longer 'endure sound doctrine', they 'turn their ears away from the truth', they 'heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears' and they are 'after their own lusts'. The word 'lust' carries the idea of sexual desire. In Greek, however, it gives a broader meaning which is 'longing for what is forbidden.' This could either be forbidden physical lust or forbidden spiritual lust. In the context of this Scripture, it means lust for something other than sound doctrine.

Another Laodicean 'characteristic' is the use of multiple Bible versions where any 'believer could find a proof text for anything he wanted to believe. Preachers and teachers with 'itching ears' who will no longer 'endure sound doctrine' are having their inferior teaching and preaching further diluted by filtering them through these corrupt Bibles. Even if the King James Bible is used, preachers and teachers of the Laodicean church won't preach negative truths. Television preachers are likely guilty of this, as television leans towards entertaining rather than convicting the masses. Virtually know of these 'personalities' can be identified as a Bible

believing Christian. The result of all this is the disseminating of heresy. This all points to the end of the Church Age approaching and the Tribulation church being set up. Laodecia is certainly a remarkable period in Church History.