

An Overview of Church History

- Introduction -

It is important that every Christian study some church history because it is his family's history. Therefore, the main purpose for writing "An Overview of Church History" is to provide Christians with a brief look at their family's history. While there are many fine books on the subject of church history I haven't been able to find one that touches on the highlights of the subject that can be adapted to a small group setting. Hopefully this booklet will solve that problem.

The method I have chosen to tell the Christian's family story is to break church history into seven periods of time called "Ages of the Church". These ages of the church are in turn linked to the kingdom parables Jesus told in the Gospels and the messages to the churches in the book of Revelation. I will introduce each church age by referring first to one of the messages written to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. In this way you will have a frame of reference for remembering more of the details.

The Seven Churches in Asia



- The Seven Churches -

In about 100 AD, the Apostle John, while under house arrest on the island of Patmos,¹ received a vision from God. He was told to write in a book the things he saw and send it to the seven churches that were in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The written copy of that vision we now call the Book of Revelation.²

In the vision the Lord Jesus Christ is seen standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands³ while holding seven stars in his right hand. The Lord reveals the mystery of the stars and lampstands by telling John that the stars were the messengers of the seven churches and that the lampstands were the seven churches. Immediately after that the Lord gives an individual message for each one of the seven churches.

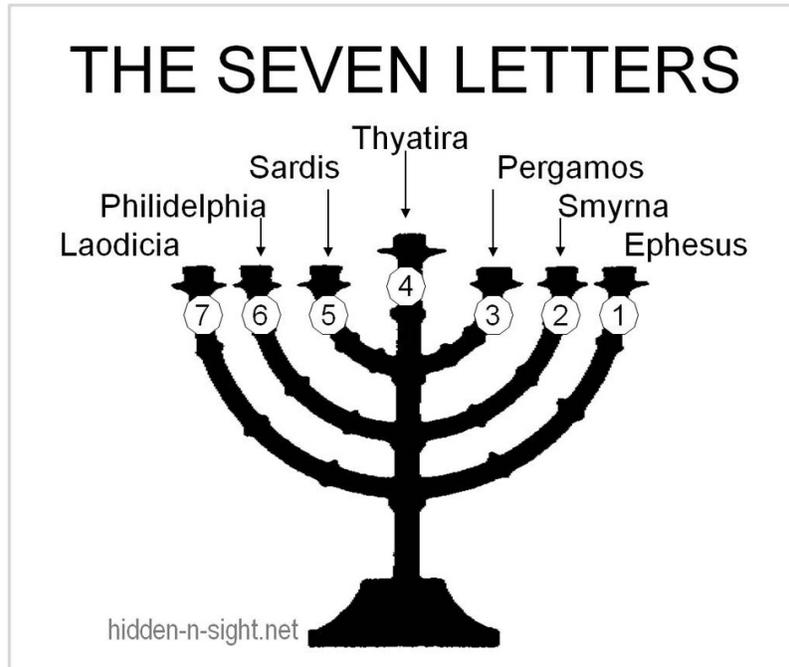
Jesus in the Midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands With the Seven Stars in His Right Hand



¹ The island of Patmos is 35 miles off the coast of Turkey and is about 7 1/2 miles long and 5 miles wide.

² The book was intended as an encyclical as it was addressed to all the individuals of a group. John's original writing was sent to each of the cities in turn starting with Ephesus. After being read, the church in each city probably copied the contents for their own use.

³ This is a vivid picture of the menorah, the seven-branched lampstand that stands in the temple of God.



- Some Observations about the Seven Churches -

1. The churches were actually seven distinct churches located in Asia Minor (Turkey) during the time of the Apostle John. They represent all the believers within the individual community, not just one particular fellowship or group. Therefore, there were marked distinguishing factors common to all the fellowships and groups within the city that the apostle is addressing.
2. The names of the cities seem to have meaning in connection with the individual message from the Lord to that city.
3. Because of the use of the number seven, which indicates a spiritual completion (the total completed work of God in a particular area or task), it appears that these seven churches stand as representatives of the total Church.
 - All individuals who are members of Christ's body, "The Church" ... should find themselves being a member of one these seven churches and subsequently should hear what the Spirit is saying to him as a member of that particular church.
 - It appears that all the churches have existed continuously throughout the Church Age.
 - As there really is only **one** church it appears that the seven individual churches might also represent changes that the Church as a whole undergoes throughout its existence. Therefore, it would be indicative of a peculiar part of church history.
 - Using the same reasoning the churches might also represent periods of growth within an individual, who also can be considered the Church. Therefore, it behooves the individual to heed what the Spirit says throughout his life.

- The Messages to the Churches -

The messages to the seven churches follow a pattern. It looks like this:

1. The Name: The Lord sends an angel (messenger) to each church location.
2. The Revelation: The Lord reveals something unique about Himself to each church.
3. The Commendation: The Lord praises each church for its good deeds.⁴
4. The Criticism: The Lord warns each church what it is doing wrong.⁵
5. The Instruction: The Lord gives each church something positive to do ... to help itself.
6. The Penalty: The Lord says there is a penalty to pay if the church does not heed His warning.
7. The Promise: The Lord gives a special reward to each church who overcomes.

- The Kingdom Parables -

Soon after giving the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His disciples eight parables concerning the Kingdom of God.⁶ These parables are listed in Matthew 13 and Mark 4. When these parables are taken in chronological order they mirror the significant characteristics of specific time periods within the church's history.

- Ages of the Church -

Biblical scholars have noted that the Church has undergone several significant changes throughout its history. Each of these changes was precipitated by an event or series of closely associated events that would characterize the Church for a period of time. These periods of time became known as "church ages." Let me give you an example.

The first church age is called the Apostolic. The reason for this is that it was the period of time in which the twelve original apostles of Jesus Christ were the major sphere of influence upon the Church. This period lasted from 31 AD following Jesus' death until about 100 AD when it is supposed the last apostle, John died.

Interestingly these church ages correspond directly and chronologically to the messages given to the seven churches and to the kingdom parables. On the following page I have inserted a chart showing these side-by-side comparisons.

⁴ The only church that has no commendable deeds is Laodicea

⁵ There are only two churches that do not receive and criticism and therefore have no penalty to pay: Smyrna and Philadelphia.

⁶ The Kingdom of God parables are:

Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23)

Parable of the Growing Plant (Mark 4:26-29)

Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)

Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33)

Parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:36-43)

Parable of the Treasure in the Field (Matthew 13:44)

Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46)

Parable of the Dragnet Cast Into the Sea (Matthew 13:47-50)

- The Letter to the Church at Ephesus -

The Meaning of the Name: “Beloved”

Revelation: *The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands.* Christ has control of all the churches and He is in each one.

Commendation: *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

1. Deeds - Hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. This group cannot be traced specifically however, the meaning of the name Nicolaitans is “victory over the people”, and alludes to those who cause people to stumble in their faith. Since they have power over people they are evidently those who have obtained leadership roles within the Church.
2. Toil - Tested false apostles, who are evil men. This Church finds out which men were truly sent by Christ. The apostle John says, *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.* (1 John 4:1-3)
3. Perseverance - This Church does not grow tired under trials.

Criticism: *But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.* This Church may have lost its desire to spread the good news of Jesus Christ by quenching the Spirit and becoming institutionalized. We know that there was a major change that began in the Church between 70 and 100 AD. This change can easily be seen in a quote from the book, To All Generations, A Study of Church History by Frank C. Roberts, on pages 41 & 42. (See - **The Great Change** -)

Instruction: *Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first.* (Spread the Gospel!)

Penalty: *I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.* (If you don't plant seed your tree will eventually die.)

Promise: *To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.* (Because you will have sown the seeds of eternal life from which you will get to eat.)

- The Apostolic Age - 31 – 100 AD

This “age” began on the day of Pentecost following Jesus’ ascension into heaven. On that day Peter preached the gospel⁷ to a multitude of Jews attending Shavout⁸ in Jerusalem and three thousand people believed, were baptized and received the Holy Spirit. The “age” ended about 100 AD when it is supposed that the last of Jesus’ original twelve apostles, John died.

Like the “parable of the **sower**” the Church began **broadcasting** God’s word concerning His Son Jesus ... **spreading** the gospel throughout the world. The foundational truths (doctrine) of the faith were established by the apostles and are found in the various writings of these men, which form what we now call the “New Testament.” This Church is seen in action throughout the book of Acts.

In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and its temple and began relocating the Jewish people throughout the empire. Up until that time Jerusalem was the primary center of Christianity and most of Church’s Jewish leadership resided there. However a new center had already been developed by the Apostle Paul at Ephesus on the west coast of Asia Minor (Turkey).

Ephesus, meaning “**Beloved**,” was located on the banks of the Cayster River where it emptied into the sea. It was a prosperous city and trading center with a fine harbor and served as a capital city of the Romans. The city was committed to the worship of the “**mother** of the gods” known as Artemis in the Greek language or Diana in the Roman. Her temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Temple of Artemis/Diana at Ephesus



⁷ The gospel is the “good news” of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name.

⁸ Shavout is the Hebrew name for “Seven Sevens” or as the Jewish people refer to it; “Weeks.” It is one of the seven “appointed times of the Lord” spoken of in Leviticus 23. Christians call this “appointed time” by its Greek name, Pentecost, meaning “Fifty Days” because it fell fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead.

According to the book of Acts, the apostle Paul left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus during his second missionary journey in 52 AD. The church at Ephesus became the main target for Paul's third missionary journey and he left Timothy there to serve as its pastor. The city would later serve as the headquarters for the apostle John and tradition holds that the Virgin Mary died and was buried there. Ephesus also served as the site of the General Ecumenical Council of the Church in 431 AD, which concerned the Christology and Pelagian Controversies and at which Mary was called the "**Mother** of God." Also the "Robber Synod" in 449 AD was held here. The city ceased to exist in the tenth century.

- The Great Change -

Two scenes of believers at worship may illustrate the change from apostolic to catholic church.

Scene one takes place in the Year of our Lord (Anno Domini) 50:

Ioannus (later called Pilgrim because he travels to Jerusalem and Rome) is a young, new convert to the Way. He heard the good news of Jesus, the Christ, from his cousin when Gaius came from the big city to visit his country relatives. Now Ioannus has come to Corinth and with Gaius attends a Christian gathering for the first time.

Entering the hall, his first impression is one of confused noise. Soon the sounds begin to filter out and he realizes several people are talking in some languages he's never heard, some strange "tongues." Before too long, however, someone rises and in good clear Greek begins to "interpret" what these people have been saying. It has to do with visions of the living Christ in heaven.

Suddenly a young woman begins singing. Spontaneously others join in until all who know the psalm are taking part. Ioannus hums and listens to the words telling of God's faithfulness to his people. In the lull following the song, an older man stands and begins talking about Jesus Christ – how he lived, died and rose again. That resurrection, he assures everyone, is the guarantee of new life for all those who are "in Christ." There are shouts of agreement and joy.

A woman is ill, so there is a short ceremony as some people anoint her with oil and pray for healing. Then someone stands up and quotes a teaching of Jesus; someone else prophesies that Jesus will return soon, warning everyone to be ready for his victorious coming. There are more shouts of joy and prayers.

Finally, it's time for supper. Everyone gathers around tables, unpacks food, and begins eating. Toward the end of the meal an older man stands up, announces the feast of love, and takes a loaf of bread and cup of wine. He recites Jesus' words: this is my body; this is my blood. They are to eat and drink in his remembrance. He invites all to share the bread and cup. Someone else speaks words of thanksgiving and benediction. The service is over.

Scene two takes place in the Year of our Lord 200:

It's Sunday, so believers come in from the surrounding towns and villages and gather in the worship hall. First the appointed reader stands, takes up the scrolls, and reads selections from the prophets and from the "memoirs" of the apostles. After the reading the choir, seated apart, begins to sing. The songs are either directly from the "memoirs" (like the Song of Mary) or from the three hundred approved hymns. The people join in, as invited, for some refrains. After the signing has ended, the bishop rises and delivers the homily. All listen quietly, although if the sermon is good, the congregation may applaud at the end.

A priest now directs all unbaptized persons to leave, for it is the time for the Eucharist. Only the "initiated" may view the priestly sacrifice of Jesus' flesh and blood and partake of the Eucharistic elements. Closing that solemn ceremony are prayers of thanksgiving. Then the congregation is dismissed.

These scenes illustrate a change in worship style so great that its like is not seen again throughout the church until the Reformation. By the end of the third century the free and spontaneous worship described in the New Testament had turned into a structured and prescribed liturgy.

Similarly the sign of admission to the church, baptism, had changed radically. From the simple ceremony conducted by any believer after a simple confession of faith, baptism became a church rite, performed only by a priest (except in emergencies), and conducted only after the instructed catechumen had affirmed an anti-Gnostic creed of faith. From a ceremony to **confer** the Holy Spirit, it became a rite that **automatically** remitted all earlier sins (some postponed baptism until just before death so as to enter heaven washed and sparkling clean).

The Letter to the Church at Smyrna

The Meaning of the Name: “Myrrh” or “bitterness”.

Revelation: *The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life.* Christ who has the first word and the last word has risen from the dead.

Commendation: *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

1. Tribulation - Suffered persecution even to death.
2. Poverty - Had their worldly possessions taken from them.
3. Blasphemed - Jews spoke against this Church, accusing it of not being of God. However, Christ says that these in fact are cooperating with Satan in opposing the will of God. Jesus said to the Jews who did not believe in Him, *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."* (John 8:44-47)

Criticism: None.

Instruction: *Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death.* Do not fear the tribulation that will come upon you. Remain faithful in your testimony of Me.

Penalty: None.

Promise: *I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.* (See ... I remained faithful to the testimony of My Father and have risen from the dead never to die again.)

- The Ante Nicene Age - 100 – 325 AD

The Ante Nicene Age began with the death of the apostle John and ended with the advent of the **First** General Ecumenical⁹ Council, which was held at Nicea, in northwestern Asia Minor in 325 AD. In fact, the words, Ante Nicene mean “before Nicea.”

Like the “parable of the **growing** plant” the Church became visible. No longer was it just some obscure religion in the outlands of the Roman Empire but now a **living** and **growing** organism challenging Rome’s traditional religion and politics. It needed to be rooted out! Enemies appeared at every level as the Church battled against accusations from Jews, persecution by the government and false teaching by heretical groups, such as the Gnostics. Thousands were martyred for their faith: being burned to death or thrown to wild animals as a spectator sport. But the **blood** of the martyrs provided fertile soil for the Church to **grow**.

The Lord’s message to this Church was appropriately sent to Smyrna, meaning “Myrrh” or “**Bitterness**.” The city itself is located on the west coast of Asia Minor (Turkey) at the mouth of the Meles River about 40 miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna was a rich and prosperous trading center famous for its beauty and public buildings and was called “the lovely - crown of Ionia - the ornament of Asia”. Polycarp, one of the Apostle John’s disciples was **martyred** there in 169 AD. Today the city is called Izmir and is the third largest in Turkey.

Izmir, Turkey



⁹ Ecumenical – relating to or representing the whole body of churches.

In the message to this Church (Revelation 2:8-11) the Lord tells them they would suffer. *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death.* After the book of Revelation was written in 96 AD the Church was persecuted in the **days** of:

1. Trajan (98-117 AD)
2. Hadrian (117-138 AD)
3. Antonius Pius (138-161 AD)
4. Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)
5. Septimius Severus (193-211 AD)
6. Maximim the Thracian (235-238 AD)
7. Decius (249-251 AD)
8. Valerian (253-260 AD)
9. Diocletian (303-305 AD)
10. Galerius (305-311 AD)

- The Rise of Creedal Statements -

As enemies of the Church began to emerge, church leaders found that they needed to develop some orthodox beliefs.¹⁰ They did this through the use of creeds. When the Church was attacked on a specific issue it formulated the correct belief about that issue and included it in an updated creed. The following creed was approved at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD.

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation, came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy Spirit.

But as for those who say, there was when He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or, who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or is created, or is subject to alteration or change – these the Catholic¹¹ Church anathematizes.

The Apostle's Creed (the final form was written no later than 724 AD)

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord
3. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,

¹⁰ The term “orthodox beliefs” means conforming to an established doctrine of correct beliefs.

¹¹ The term “catholic” simply means “universal” or in other words, all of the church.

4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
5. He descended into **hell**.¹² On the third day He rose again;
6. He ascended into heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
7. and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and the life everlasting. Amen.¹³

- Church Leadership -

Ignatius (d 117 AD) opposed Gnostic heresies. Gnostics generally believed that matter was evil and that emancipation comes through esoteric [higher] knowledge of spiritual truth. He was the first to distinguish between bishops and elders.¹⁴

Papias (60-130 AD) was an acquaintance of the apostle John and held a premillennial view of eschatology.

Polycarp (69-155 AD) was discipled under the apostle John and served as the bishop of Smyrna.

Justin Martyr (100-165 AD) was one of the apologists. He was trained in philosophy and argued for Christianity on the basis of prophecy, miracles and ethics.

Irenaeus (late 2nd century) was discipled under Polycarp. He was a missionary, apologist and strong opponent of Gnosticism.

Tertullian (160-220 AD) was the son of a Roman army officer. He was trained in law and laid important groundwork for the doctrine of the trinity.

Origen (185-254 AD) was an advocate of the allegorical method of interpreting Scripture. The use of allegorical interpretation while disregarding the literal or plain truth of a passage of Scripture has led to heresy and dissention within the church.

Eusebius (263-339 AD) is known as the father of Church history. He was also a friend and advisor of Emperor Constantine.

¹² "He descended into hell." This statement was added to the Apostle's Creed sometime before 724 AD. The source of the statement is unknown but much controversy within the church has arisen over it. It appears that the basis for the statement might have been taken from 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 4:6.

¹³ Most later creedal statements, like the Apostle's Creed, were broken into twelve parts. Traditionally, there are three reasons for this pattern: 1) to make it easier to memorize, 2) to divide the main lines of thought, and 3) to honor the twelve apostles.

¹⁴ The title of Elder was given to those who presided over a local church body. The name was used because normally older and wiser people were put into these positions. This title would later become synonymous with the title, Pastor. The title of Bishop was given to an Elder who helped coordinate and oversee the affairs of several local church bodies, usually within a larger metropolitan area. Eventually most power and authority were removed from the local congregation and its Elders and placed into the hands of the Bishop.

- The Letter to the Church at Pergamum -

The Meaning of the Name: “Fortified” or “High Tower” or “Thoroughly Married”

Revelation: *The One who has the sharp two-edged sword.* Christ is the One who speaks the truth, which is the Word of God.

Commendation: *I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

1. Dwelling Place - It is right in the middle of Satan’s (the deceiver ... the liar ... the accuser ... the adversary) camp.
2. Testimony and Faith - Held firm to the truth as the apostle Paul says, *“if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.* (Romans 10:9-10)

Criticism: *'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

You permit the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans as a group cannot be traced specifically however, the meaning of the name Nicolaitans is “victory over the people”, and alludes to those who cause people to stumble in their faith. Since they have power over people they are evidently those who have obtained leadership roles within the Church.

The text parallels what Balaam taught King Balak to do in order to cause the Israelites to apostatize in their faith towards God. Balaam knew that there was nothing either he or King Balak could do to curse the sons of Israel. But if they could get the sons of Israel to turn away from their God, then God Himself would bring disaster on the people. Balaam told King Balak that **intermarriage** between his women and Israel’s men would begin to turn their hearts from God. The women would get the men to eat food sacrificed to idols and then to commit acts of sexual immorality.

The eating of things sacrificed to idols and committing acts of immorality may have literally happened to this church but evidence to support it is hard to find. However, the text appears to be pointing towards a spiritual apostasy. By creating a **marriage** between the Church, which belongs to the Lord and the kingdoms of this world, which belong to Satan the Church would eventually be led into **idolatry**. Eating food sacrificed to idols would be taking worldly counsel, instead of partaking of the Word of God and following the Holy Spirit. Sexual immorality exists when you become intimate with one to whom you don’t belong ... the Church giving its body to be used by the kingdoms of this world for their pleasure.

Instruction: *Repent therefore.* Change your mind; do not allow this to continue.

Penalty: *I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.* Christ will fight against all those who teach these things by overcoming them with the truth showing them to be liars and opposing the truth.

Promise: *I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'* If you overcome I will feed you good food ... food from heaven not the earth ... heavenly wisdom because the Spirit of God dwells in Me and I speak the truth and do not lie. I will also give you a white stone showing that you have been acquitted and I will give you My name to be a husband to you in all things.

- The Post Nicene Age - 325 – 787 AD

The Post Nicene Age began with the First General Ecumenical Council, which was held at Nicea, in northwestern Asia Minor in 325 AD. It ended at the seventh and **last** General Ecumenical Council, which was also held at Nicea in 787 AD. The words, Post Nicene mean “after Nicea.”

The “parable of the mustard seed” shows that when the mustard plant grows to sufficient size the birds of the air build their nests in it. Jesus explained to His disciples that the birds were representative of the “evil one” (Matthew 13:4 and 19). During this “age” the Church experienced great external growth but **worldly alliances** were made. With the rise of Constantine as Emperor of the Roman Empire the persecution of the Church ceased and actually came into his favor. Constantine was a pagan sun worshipper throughout his life but was baptized into the faith on his deathbed in 337 AD. During his period of rule, a **marriage** of Church and State developed. Constantine got deeply involved in Church affairs at the First General Ecumenical Council of the Church at Nicea in 325 AD. He virtually imposed the understanding we have of the **trinity** today in opposition to the Arian belief. Also at this time **Sunday** was declared the day of rest instead of the Sabbath¹⁵ and the date of Bikkurim¹⁶ was fixed on the Roman calendar in **disregard** of the Biblical calendar. At one time Constantine claimed to be a bishop of the Church for external affairs, believing that God had called him to regulate the Church’s life. Progressively Constantine saw Christianity as the **state** religion. And in 391 AD Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the **State** religion and Church membership **mandatory**. The Lord’s message to this Church was appropriately sent to Pergamum, which means “Fortified” or “High Tower” or “Thoroughly **Married**.”

¹⁵ The Biblical weekly Sabbath was and still is the seventh day of the week and corresponds to our Saturday. The weekly Sabbath begins at sunset on the Friday and ends at sunset on Saturday.

¹⁶ Bikkurim is the Hebrew name for “Firstfruits”, the day on which Jesus was raised from the dead. It is one of the seven “appointed times of the Lord” spoken of in Leviticus 23. Christians now call this “appointed time”, Easter. The name Easter was derived from the name of the Greek goddess of sexuality and fertility ... Astarte. This **association** has produced the Easter bunny and Easter eggs.

The city of Pergamum is located about 75 miles north of Smyrna, inland twenty miles from the sea and three miles north of the Bakyrtschai (Caicus) River. It became an important city in 282 BC, when Philetaerus revolted against Lysimachus of Thrace and made it the capital of what became the Attalid kingdom, which in 133 BC was bequeathed by Attalus III to the Romans. The art of making parchment was discovered here and it was called pergamena. Pergamum was sort of cross between a pagan cathedral city, university town, and royal residence. Its library, which contained over 200,000 volumes, was moved to Egypt by Antony as a gift to Cleopatra. The small town of Bergama is all that remains of it today.

Several pagan cults existed in Pergamum ... Zeus, Athena and Dionysus. The cult of Asclepius was established by the Attalid kings with that of Asclepius Soter (“the savior” or “healer”) being of special importance. The first temple of the imperial cult was built in 29 BC in honor of Rome and Augustus.

The Post Nicene age saw the rise of Monasticism, a withdrawing from the world into communal living in a monastery or convent. St Anthony, the most famous of the “Hermit Monks” was on the scene. St Pachomius established the first monastery in 323 AD and the eastern segment of the Church followed his model. St Benedict followed by establishing the western model of communal living at Monte Cassino in 529 AD and developed the “Rule”¹⁷ in 534 AD.

The “Bible” as we know it was compiled from the various Christian writings and authorized first in the East by Athanasius (writer of the Athanasius Creed) in 367 AD, then by the West at the Synod¹⁸ of Rome in 382 AD and finally by the entire Church at the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD.

Also during this time the **hierarchy** of the Church came into being following a **Roman** or **worldly** pattern. At the Council of Nicea in 325 AD the metropolitan bishops of the Church gained ascendancy (superiority, authority) over country bishops. Then in 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople¹⁹ special honor was granted to the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Finally in 451 AD at the Council of Chalcedon²⁰ Leo I, the Bishop of Rome, asserted that the Bishop of Rome should be supreme, formulating the Petrine²¹ concept of papal authority. The Council explicitly rejected Leo’s claim to absolute authority in the Church.

The next step in establishing **papal** supremacy was taken by another Roman Bishop, Gelasius (492-496 AD). He wrote, “Two there are, August emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled and the sacred authority of the priesthood (of which the **pope** is head) and the royal power. Of these, the responsibility of the priests is weightier in so far as they will answer for the Kings of

¹⁷ The “Rule” of St Benedict became the basis for the rules of practically every Christian monastic community in the West. In it are the guidelines for living the spiritual life - through work, prayer, study, obedience, community, and moderate asceticism.

¹⁸ A synod is a council or an assembly of church officials or churches.

¹⁹ This was also the second General Ecumenical Council.

²⁰ This was also the fourth General Ecumenical Council.

²¹ The Petrine doctrine states that Peter was the **first** bishop of Rome and later the church’s **first** Pope. By using the term “**first**” indicates that there are more to follow.

men themselves at divine judgment.” Both priests and rulers, said Gelasius, should submit to the **pope**, who is answerable only to Christ.

In His message to Pergamum (Revelation 2:13) Jesus speaks of Antipas being the Lord’s faithful witness who was killed among them in the Church but no historical record can be found concerning this individual. However, a clue might be found in his name Antipas, which means “against the **father**”. Could this be someone who resisted the idea of the **papacy**?

Worship, at first very simple, was developed into elaborate, stately, imposing ceremonies having the entire outward splendor that had belonged to pagan temples. Ministers became priests. The term “priest” was not applied to Christian ministers before 200 AD. The term was borrowed from the Jewish system, and from the example of heathen priesthood. Leo I (440-461 AD) prohibited priests from **marrying**, and celibacy of priests became a law of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 395 AD the Roman Empire divided into two parts, the western empire of which Rome was the capital and the eastern empire of which Constantinople was the capital. The Church followed this example with its first schism²² in 484 AD and it's final one in 1054 AD with the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the west and the Greek Orthodox Church at Constantinople in the east.

The Post-Nicene church age, which spanned a 462-year period of time, was predominantly marked by the development of the Church’s orthodox doctrine. The doctrine itself was developed by various bishops within the Church and approved at one of the seven General Ecumenical Councils.

In the message to the Church at Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) Jesus said that it dwelt right in the middle of Satan’s (the deceiver’s ... the liar’s ... the accuser’s ... the adversary’s) camp. He also said that Satan’s throne was there as well. Could he have been referring the “Great Altar of Zeus” which was discovered at Pergamum and after its excavation in 1886 shipped to Berlin, Germany where it is currently on display?

Great Altar of Zeus



²² The word “schism” means a separation or division into factions.

- The Seven General Ecumenical Councils -

1. The First Council of Nicea, (325) repudiated Arianism, adopted the Nicene Creed.
2. The First Council of Constantinople, (381) revised the Nicene Creed into the present form used in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.
3. The Council of Ephesus, (431) repudiated Nestorianism, proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God.
4. The Council of Chalcedon, (451) repudiated the Eutychian doctrine of Monophysitism, described and delineated the two natures of Christ, human and divine; adopted the Chalcedonian Creed. The Eastern Orthodox Church does not recognize this council or any of the following councils.
5. The Second Council of Constantinople, (553) reaffirmed decisions and doctrines explicated by previous Councils, condemned new Arian, Nestorian, and Monophysite writings.
6. The Third Council of Constantinople, (680-681) repudiated Monothelitism, affirmed that Christ had both human and Divine wills.
7. The Second Council of Nicea, (787) restoration of the veneration of icons and end of the first iconoclasm.

- Church Leadership (Not previously mentioned) -

Jerome (340-420 AD) translated the Latin version of the Bible, the Vulgate, from 386-404 AD while living at Jesus' birth site in Bethlehem.

Augustine (354-430 AD) defended the faith against several forms of heresy. He also wrote the book "The City of God" from 412-426 AD, which explains a Christian's relation to the world and how he should live in it. This book has become the major force behind the papacy's claims of power on earth although it was not meant that way by the author.

Patrick (389-461 AD) was the missionary to Ireland in 432 AD. It is interesting to note that Ireland is the only country converted to Christianity without a martyr.

Columba (521-597 AD) was a missionary to Scotland in 563 AD.

Columban (543-615 AD) was a missionary to France, Switzerland, and Italy in 590 AD.

Gregory I served as pope from 590-604 AD. A Benedictine monk, he did not desire the office but served it well. He solved the problem of how to feed the people of Rome, ran the Church efficiently, raised armies to stop the invasion of the Lombards, wrote Biblical commentaries and theological works, unified the liturgical service and wrote the music we call Gregorian chants. His major contribution however was to turn the Benedictine monks into a missionary arm of the Church.

The Venerable Bede (673-735 AD) a Benedictine monk was England's first historian.

Boniface (Willibrord) (680-754 AD) was a missionary to the Frisians in 695 AD. He also served at the court of Charles Martel.

- An Early Christian Writing by Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381-

Jesus began His ministry by being hungry,
yet He is the Bread of Life.

Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty,
yet He is the Living Water.

Jesus was weary,
yet He is our rest.

Jesus paid tribute,
yet He is the King.

Jesus was accused of having a demon,
yet He cast out demons.

Jesus wept,
yet He wipes away our tears.

Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver,
yet He redeemed the world.

Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
yet He is the Good Shepherd.

Jesus died,
yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.

- The Letter to the Church at Thyatira -

The Meaning of the Name: “Perpetual sacrifice” or “continual offering”

Revelation: *The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.* Jesus Christ who is able to see and judge all things.

Commendation: *I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.*

Criticism: *But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality.* A woman with the name of Jezebel cannot be identified with the Church in any literal sense; however her identity can be discovered on a spiritual level by using information from the Bible concerning her. The woman is Empress Irene of the Eastern Roman Empire who led the Church to worship graven images. In history books the events surrounding image worship are called The Iconoclastic Controversy. (See the separate article on - **Jezebel** - following)

Instruction: *But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them-- I place no other burden on you. 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.* Keep doing what you were doing and don't become involved in this teaching.

Penalty: *Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.* Christ will make her a whore (to be used by the nations) and those who have relationships (agree) with her will suffer great tribulation and their children will be killed by plagues.²³

Promise: *He who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.* I see what you are doing and will reward you according to your deeds, do the deeds that I did because they honor the Father. If you overcome, I will give you a day on which you will rule and reign over the nations because all power and authority has been given to Me by My Father.

²³ Beginning in the 1340's, the Black Death (Bubonic Plague) hit the continent of Europe decimating between 30 to 60% of its population, which dealt the Roman Catholic Church a devastating blow. An estimated 75 million people died in that pandemic alone. Yet there were to be more than 100 other plague epidemics, which would sweep over Europe within the next 400 years.

- The Medieval Age - 787 – 1517 AD

The Medieval Age began at the seventh and last General Ecumenical Council, which was held at Nicea in 787 AD. It ended when Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic priest nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church igniting the fires of the Protestant Reformation in 1517 AD. Historians refer to this period of history as the “Dark Ages”, during which the Church became corrupted from within and the corruption came in **three** parts: worship, doctrine, and leadership.

The Medieval Age is associated with “parable of the leaven.” In the parable a **woman** hides **leaven** in **three** parts of a measure until all of it is changed. Before continuing with this Church “age” we need to know more about leaven.

Leaven is a corrupting agent that **changes the nature** of the substance it is put into. In the parable, leaven was put in three portions of meal. The three portions represent the whole thing that was leavened. The Hebrew standard whole unit of dry measure is the ephah and it takes three seahs to equal one ephah. By this, Jesus is indicating that every human being consists of **three** parts: spirit, soul, and body. So when leaven is introduced into each of the parts, **the entire nature of the person will be changed**. But more importantly we must know what the spiritual **equivalent** of leaven is. Jesus said it was **teaching!** *And Jesus said to them, “Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **teaching** of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:6 & 12)* Most Christians associate leaven with sin however, it depends on the leaven’s (teaching’s) **source** as to how it will affect the substance (human being); is the leaven (teaching) from God, the world or the devil?

The Ruins of Thyatira



The Church that was in Thyatira also represents the Medieval Age. The name, Thyatira means “Perpetual sacrifice” or “continual offering” The city itself is located about 40 miles ESE of Pergamum connecting the Hermus and Caicus valleys lying on the trade route from Pergamum to Laodicea. Thyatira was a center of manufacture; dyeing, garment making, pottery, and brass-working are among the trades that known to have existed there. The principal deity of the city was Apollo, worshipped as the sun god under the surname, Tyrimnus. Lydia, Paul’s first convert at Philippi was from Thyatira. Today this city is named Akhisar.

- Corruption of Worship -

The changes that were made in the worship of God during this period of time were stupendous both in their nature and quantity. Ritualism was in vogue ... as pagan teaching, ceremonies and practices entered the Church.

Images were placed in churches in violation of the Second Commandment under the pretense that it was enhancing the worshipper's experience. Christians knelt, prayed to and burned candles before them just as idol worshippers in pagan religions had done before them. Seven sacraments²⁴ replaced the two that Jesus had commanded which were baptism and communion. The rosary, which was of Hindu origin made its appearance in 810 AD and was Christianized.

And the simple “breaking of bread” or “communion” became a ritual all of its own, called the “Mass”, officiated over by a group of people known as the clergy. The Mass centers on a priest who offers Christ as a sacrifice at each service and then supernaturally changes bread and wine into Christ’s body and blood, which the congregants partake of. This repeated offering of Christ as a sacrificial victim at each Mass is a violation of Scripture. *So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (Hebrews 9:28) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)* No wonder Jesus sent his message to the Church that was in Thyatira whose name, “Perpetual **Sacrifice**” or “continual offering”, fits so perfectly.

- Corruption of Doctrine -

Using Augustine’s book, City of God as their basis the popes set up the Holy Roman Empire and crowned its first king, Charlemagne in 800 AD. Upon conquering his enemies, Charlemagne would give them a choice of baptism or death.

In 1075, Pope Gregory VII issued the decree “*Dictatus Papae*” that contained 27 statements of powers ascribed to the Pope. Among them are: “The Roman Pontiff alone is rightly to be called universal. He alone can depose or reinstate bishops. The Pope is the only one whose feet are to be kissed by all princes. He may depose Emperors. He himself can be judged by no one. The Roman Church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity.”

²⁴ Sacraments are holy rites or ordinances.

In 1223 AD, Pope Gregory IX set up the Inquisition to enforce papal doctrine on the people. Anyone who did not conform had to recant his beliefs or he was tortured and put to death. For example, John Wycliffe (1320-1384 AD) taught that all tradition, including Church council decisions and doctrines, must be tested by the Bible. "Holy Scripture," he said, "is the highest authority for every Christian." He applied that principle by working to have the Bible translated into his native English. Wycliffe was considered to hold heretical beliefs and sentenced to death because he would not recant. Protected by English kings he died a natural death. However, by order of the Council of Constance (1414-1418 AD) his body was exhumed and publicly burned.

In 1302 AD, Pope Boniface VIII issued the papal bull, *Unam Sanctum*, which stated that both the temporal and spiritual swords are ultimately in the pope's hands, and therefore secular rulers rule only with papal approval.

- Corruption of Leadership -

Church leadership became more and more involved with secular power as evidenced with the formation of the Holy Roman Empire. Nicolas I (858-867 AD) was the first Pope to wear a crown and used the Pseudo Isidorian Decretal to support the power and authority of the popes since the beginning of the Church. It was found that these were forgeries and that Nicolas had lied about them yet were still used to a large extent in the development of the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church.

The division of the Church followed the pattern of the Roman Empire with its last schism (division) beginning in 869 AD and completed in 1054 AD. This period of time is also referred to as the **Midnight** of the Dark Ages as its popes were full of bribery, corruption, immorality and bloodshed. In history the period from 904-963 AD is called the "Rule of the Harlots". The popes after this period sold their offices and robbed Christians. The Bishop of Orleans, referring to John XII, Leo XIII, and Boniface VII, called them, "monsters of guilt, reeking in blood and filth; Antichrist sitting in the Temple of God." Most bishops and priests had paid for their offices, for it gave them a chance to live in luxury.

From 1095 - 1248 AD the popes ordered seven crusades to the Holy Land to regain it from the Muslims. They all eventually ended in failure at the cost of thousands of lives.

Innocent III (1198-1216 AD) was the most powerful of all the popes. He claimed to be the "Vicar of Christ", "Vicar of God", and "Supreme Sovereign over the Church and the World". In addition he:

- Decreed transubstantiation.
- Confirmed auricular confession.
- Declared that no pope could ever depart from the catholic faith.
- Declared papal infallibility.
- Condemned the Magna Carta.
- Forbade reading the Bible in the vernacular (common language).
- Order the extermination of heretics.
- Ordered the massacre of the Albigenes.

From 1303-1377 AD the papal palace was removed from Rome and moved to Avignon, France. This period is known as the “Babylonian Captivity” of the popes. Then in 1377 AD a schism (division) developed in the papacy where there were two sets of popes each hurling curses at one another. The division was healed in 1417 AD. Pope John XXIII (1410-1415 AD) is called by some the most depraved criminal who ever sat on the Papal Throne.

Many other popes had concubines, mistresses and illegitimate children. They sold and granted indulgences to sin, sold offices, and decreed that money would deliver souls from purgatory.

- Other Events -

Not all things during this period of Church history were so bleak and especially in the latter part of the period when the cries for reform were heard. Several monastic orders came into existence from 910-1225 AD that became centers of learning and provided an evangelistic outreach. They produced some of the leaders of reform movements.

Francis of Assisi (1182-1224 AD) gave up his middle class life and began to pattern his life after his newfound master, Jesus Christ. He stands as a great shining star in the middle of one of the darkest periods in history. St Francis took to the road sharing the life of the poor and preaching the good news of God’s love. He started the order, which bears his name, the Franciscans. He tried to close the gap that existed between clergy and laity by exemplifying the ideal of the priesthood of all believers. Francis resigned from his own order because it had become too complex and didn’t observe the simple rule of faith. Later the popes used his order to persecute Protestants during the Reformation.

Scholasticism was the order of the day from 1033 - 1350 AD. The intent was to help people discover God through philosophy and reason. Anselm (1033-1109 AD) provided us with an understandable basis of God’s atonement for our sins. Some of the later scholars attempted to force worldly philosophical views into the Church. One of their major opponents was Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD) who believed that since God’s ways don’t necessarily coincide with human reason, we can’t simply ally revelation and reason. Furthermore, he rejected the idea that reason gives greater certainty of faith, teaching instead that certainty comes through mystical union with Christ and through humbly following the Holy Spirit’s leading.

Reforming a corrupt Church was in the heart and minds of many and groups like the Waldensians, Lollards and Hussites led the way.

Peter Waldo, a businessman asked the Church if he could preach Christ and was denied, so he preached anyway and was excommunicated. His group, the Waldensians believing that only personal faith was necessary for salvation, attacked the Church’s whole sacramental system. They rejected as extra-Biblical the cult of the saints, prayers for the dead, and purgatory. They affirmed the Bible, especially the New Testament, as the sole source of authority and translated the Bible into the people’s language.

Bernard of Clairvaux tried to reform the Church from within. He practiced and preached humility, which struck home against papal wealth and splendor. He criticized papal political activities asking for a return to the spiritual function of the office. His emphasis on divine grace as the motivating power to salvation was of special importance for the later Protestant Reformers.

Two theologians, an Englishman, John Wycliffe (1320-1384 AD) and a Czech, John Huss (1374-1415 AD) lit the fires of the reform movement literally, when their bodies were publicly burned. Both of them not only challenged papal authority but the very sacramental structure and theology of the Church. Wycliffe's group became known as Lollards and Huss' group the Hussites.

The coming reformation of the Church was to be mightily assisted by two events that occurred within 90 years of the burning of Wycliffe and Huss. In 1453 Gutenberg began printing Bibles on the first moveable printing press in Europe and in 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered America.

- Jezebel -

Perhaps no other Old Testament character has had such a profound impact upon the people of God as Jezebel. Her leadership plagued the people of Israel in her time. And Jesus in the book of Revelation even warns the Church not to tolerate her. She epitomizes evil and has become a symbol of all that is detestable from a moral standpoint.

The first mention of Jezebel is in 1 Kings 16:31 on the occasion of her marriage to King Ahab of Israel in the year 889 BC. Jezebel is not an Israelite, one of God's chosen people. She is a foreigner, a pagan and an idol worshipper. Jezebel is the daughter of Ethbaal (which means "with Baal"), king of Tyre and Sidon.

There is a spiritual clue here for us. In Ezekiel 28, God speaks against the king of Tyre. According to the text, the King of Tyre is really Satan, the anointed cherub. By association, Jezebel is the daughter of Satan. The daughter of Satan marries the leader of Israel in order to corrupt God's people. Satan's master plan is and always has been the destruction of God's people. And Satan knows that God will destroy His own people if they turn away from Him.

After becoming queen of Israel, Jezebel instituted the worship of Baal, had an altar and temple built for him and erected Asherah. She tried to have Elijah killed when he confronted her prophets in 879 BC. In order to obtain a vineyard she had a man named Naboth killed by forging her husband's signature on some documents and then using the king's seal to make it official. After her husband's death in 870 BC she continued on as Queen Mother until her own demise. In 857 BC, Jezebel was thrown out of an upper window by her own men, then trampled by horses and had her body and blood consumed by dogs. Jezebel was no ordinary woman!

More than nine hundred years later her character reemerges in the apocalyptic writings of the Apostle John. In the Book of Revelation chapter 2, verses 18 through 29, Jesus instructs the Apostle to write a letter to the angel of the Church in Thyatira. That letter points out that the Church is tolerating the woman Jezebel, describes her role, what she is teaching and calls on the

Church to repent. Verses 20 and 22 hold the crux of the matter and reads as follows: *“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.”* This Jezebel is certainly no ordinary woman either. She has infected the entire Church with false teaching and immorality. Which woman has ever had that much power and influence?

My intent is to identify the woman and compare her attributes with that of the original Jezebel. In order to do that your mindset may have to be tweaked a little. Since Jesus’ death until now there has only been one Church, one Body of which we are all members. Oh sure, we all go to our own church. And there is the church in Denver and the church in London and so on. But the fact remains that in God’s eyes there is only one Church and Jesus Christ His Son is building it.

Jesus states that Jezebel is in the Church. So that is where we must find her. She will have the characteristics of the original Jezebel including her power and influence. Throughout history only one woman matches those qualifications, Empress Irene of the Eastern Roman Empire.

1. Jezebel was not an Israelite.

Irene was not a Christian.

2. Jezebel married Ahab, the king (ruler) of Israel.

In 769 AD, Irene married Leo IV, who became Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire from 775 - 780 AD.

Note – During this period of history the power of the Roman Empire had been diluted and the control of it centered in two locations: Rome, Italy and Constantinople, now modern day Istanbul, Turkey. The Church split along these lines as well. The bishop of Rome headed the Church in the west and the bishop of Constantinople the Church in the east. Each side called their own bishop, the Pope. Eventually the infighting between the two sides erupted into a final full-blown schism occurring in the year 1054 AD. The western branch of the Church was called Roman Catholic and the eastern branch, Greek Orthodox. In the eastern branch of the Church (Greek Orthodox) the authority of the emperor over both Church and State affairs wasn’t seriously challenged. In fact, some have referred to the Eastern Church as caesaropapist: the emperor (Caesar) also acted as pope (papa).

3. Jezebel’s husband Ahab was a corrupt king, who ruled over God’s chosen people.

Irene’s husband, Leo IV was a worldly king who ruled over Christ’s body, the Church.

4. Jezebel was a Baal worshipper and sacrificed at the Asherah, a wooden symbol of a female deity.

Irene venerated (worshipped) idols (icons ... images).

5. Jezebel considered herself a prophetess. A prophetess is one who hears what God says concerning the truth and declares it to others. She influenced her husband to erect an altar to Baal and set up Asherah.

Upon her husband's death in 780 AD, Irene became the **first** woman Emperor. She considered herself a prophetess when she, immediately issued a papal (royal) decree that image worship was acceptable in the Church. Leo III had strictly banned image worship in 726 AD.

6. Jezebel ruled over the prophets of Baal.

Irene ruled over the Church bishops and in 787 AD called the Second Council of Nicea to officially permit the worship of images, which it did.

7. Jezebel led the Israelites astray.

Irene's actions have caused the Church to pray, adore and give thanks to statues and pictures that are representations of human beings such as the Saints, Joseph, and the Virgin Mary. Doing these things amounts to spiritual adultery and immorality. God has specifically commanded this not to be done. *"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."*

8. After Jezebel's husband, Ahab, died she lived 12 more years before she was thrown out of her window by her own men.

Irene reigned for 22 years before her men threw her out of her own kingdom by exile in 802 AD. She died the next year.

9. God gave Jezebel 22 years to repent, from the time that Elijah defeated her prophets until she died.

God gave the Empress Irene 22 years to repent from her initial approval of image worship until she died.

The Rest Of The Story - In 813 AD, Leo V again made it illegal to worship images, however in 843 AD **another woman**, Empress Theodora, convened the Council of Constantinople in order to secure image worship again. Image worship was approved and still stands today. The western or Roman Church, which had fought so hard to prevent the veneration of images eventually, succumbed to the practice itself. Altogether the Iconoclastic Controversy spanned about a 120-year period of Church history.

- The Letter to the Church at Sardis -

The Meaning of the Name: “Those escaping” or “renovation”

Revelation: *He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.* Christ gives the Holy Spirit at the appropriate time.

Commendation: *But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.* These have not been outside in the world but have remained inside close to Me.

Criticism: *I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.* This Church has gone to sleep on its reputation.

Instruction: *Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent.*

Quit sleeping and exercise your faith to reform yourselves.

Originally, you recognized what was wrong with the Church, you repented of its deeds and reformed that which was wrong, therefore continue to allow yourselves to be transformed.

Penalty: *I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.* Christ will come again and they will not know it because they are asleep.

Promise: *He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.* Since I have been given all the power of God (Holy Spirit and angels) if you overcome, I will clothe you with robes of righteousness, give you eternal life, and sing your praises before God and the angels.

- The Reformation Age - 1517 - 1726 AD

The Reformation Age began when Martin Luther, a Roman Catholic priest nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church igniting the fires of the Protestant **Reformation** in 1517 AD. The age ended with the coming of the Great Awakening in 1726.

The “parable of the wheat and tares” demonstrates that there is a **difference** between wheat and tares, which when first planted look alike. But as they both grow to maturity the true identity of each becomes known. And so it is with the words of God and the words of Satan. They each produce a different kind of fruit. The Reformation Age Church becomes aware of the **differences** between what the Scriptures say and what is really being taught and practiced. **Reforming** the Church becomes the first priority but when the **Counter-Reformation** is organized at the Council of Trent in 1545, **separation** becomes the only option.

The Lord’s message to this Church was appropriately sent to Sardis which means, “**Those escaping**” or “**renovation.**” Sardis is located about 50 miles east of Smyrna on the highway leading to Ankara, the capital of present day Turkey. The city became known as the byword for wealth and its religion consisted of “mystery cults”, notably that of Cybele. The great temple of Artemis was there. Today Sardis it is a small village called Sart.

Martin Luther



This Church is characterized by **reform** and Martin Luther (1483 - 1546 AD) stood at the forefront of Protestant Reformation. He sparked a change in the hearts of men to **reform** the errors of doctrine developed by the papacy and to correct the abuses of the leadership. Three of his 95 theses are written below:

32 “Those who believe that, through letters of pardon, they are made sure of their own salvation, will be eternally damned along with their teachers.”

37 “Every true Christian, whether living or dead, has a share in all the benefits of Church, given him by God, even without letters of pardon.”

86 “Why doesn’t the pope, whose riches this day are more ample than those of the wealthiest of the wealthy, build the basilica of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with that of poor believers?”

At the Disputation of Leipzig in 1519, Luther maintained that popes and councils err and contradict each other. Then in 1520 he wrote three major treatises that assured an irrevocable **break** with the Roman Catholic Church:

1. Address to the Nobility of the German Nations - called on the secular German princes to reform the Church, since the clergy refused to do so.
2. The Babylonian Captivity of the Church - attacked the sacramental system, reducing the sacraments from seven to three - Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confession. The three “captives of the Church,” said Luther, are 1) withholding the cup from the laity in the Lord’s Supper, 2) the doctrine of transubstantiation, and 3) the teaching that the mass is a sacrifice.
3. On Christian Liberty - presented Luther’s teaching on the Christian life. Faith, he said, frees the believer from slavery to a law code to loving obedience. Good works are not performed out of anxiety or fear of judgment. “The good man does good works” but “good works do not make a man good.”

Another man who had a profound effect on the Reformation was Ulrich Zwingli (1484 - 1531 AD), whose Sixty-seven Articles published in 1523 AD asserted that:

1. The Bible is the only source of authority for the Church; all tradition, all councils, all papal pronouncements must be judged by the Bible.
2. Jesus Christ is the only head of the Church and its only eternal priest; the papacy does not have absolute authority over the Church.
3. The mass is not a sacrifice; it is rather a remembrance of Christ’s already accomplished sacrifice on Calvary.
4. Pilgrimages and other supposedly meritorious works are detrimental to salvation since they give only false security.

5. Civil rulers have the duty to promulgate and enforce laws that bring society into conformity with the divine will.

Several groups nicknamed “Anabaptists” (rebaptizers) began to arise in 1525 AD. This name was given to them, as they believed only in adult baptism, because infants could make no responsible decision for Christ. They rejected state churches such as Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Roman Catholics and taught the “gathered church” - a voluntary association of only those serious about their **discipleship**. Logically, they argued for separation of Church and State and toleration of religious minorities. They believed that since civil governments are outside the realm of grace, under power of the evil one, and use force, execution, and war to achieve their ends, they should be left to unbelievers. Christians, who are required to turn the other cheek, to be meek, lowly, and long-suffering should not become involved in the state’s efforts to keep order in a sinful world.

George Witzel (1501 -1573 AD), was originally a follower of Luther but became a Catholic priest who led the **Catholic Reformation** from 1525-1545 AD. He petitioned the Church to return to its simple ancient roots, to translate the Bible into the languages of the people and to preach sermons based on Biblical texts. In addition he attacked the “private” mass, advocated education for ordinary church members, and emphasized the common roots of both Roman Catholics and Protestants. His voice was not heard.

In 1545 AD, the Council of Trent was called by the pope and met in three sessions, which ended in 1563 AD. This council probably has had more long-term effect on Catholicism than any other. It rejected any conciliatory approach to Protestantism and attacked both Protestant and Catholic **reformers**. The best way to show what the Council of Trent was about is to delineate the stand it took on a number of key reformation teachings:

1. Sole Authority of Scripture. The Council of Trent asserted that Scripture and tradition have **equal** authority and **only** the mother church may interpret both. Further, the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible (disliked by both Catholic and Protestant reformers) is the “only **authentic** edition” and “no one should presume or dare to reject it under any pretext whatever.”
2. Justification by faith. The Council of Trent taught that faith is but “the **beginning** of man’s salvation,” which must also include hope and charity. Salvation is **not** wholly the work of God, but requires human cooperation with God. There is **not** certainty about salvation, for “no one can know with the certitude of faith ... that he has obtained God’s grace.” Saving grace must come through the **sacraments administered by the Roman Catholic Church**, “for all true justification either begins through the sacraments, or once begun, increases through them, or when lost, is regained through them.”
3. Number of Sacraments. The Council of Trent reaffirmed seven sacraments, declaring that anyone who denied **any** of the sacraments should be “**anathema**”.

Besides such open doctrinal opposition to **reformers**, the Council of Trent also defended many of the widely criticized abuses of Catholic practice. It insisted the Church has the right and power to grant **indulgences**. It reaffirmed the practices of **venerating** saints and relics, for through these means Christians may “obtain **favours** with God” and “many benefits are granted to men by God.” It even maintained the **Latin** liturgy and placed the future of the Roman Catholic Church in **papal** hands.

The popes used the decisions of Trent to launch the **Counter-Reformation**, which lasted about 100 years. The Jesuit Order, founded by Ignatius Loyola, 1491- 1556 AD, who acted as “spiritual knights”, headed it. They openly declared **war** on the Protestants and **massacred** them by the thousands. One famous case was the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre of 1572 AD in which 20,000 Calvinist men, women, and children were slaughtered. To celebrate this “victory”, Pope Gregory XIII held a mass of thanksgiving, praising God for the destruction of so many heretics. It is also this pope who developed the Gregorian calendar in 1582, which we use today.

Persecution and a desire to worship God free from state (worldly) control drove men to settle the “New World”. In 1620 AD, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock to set up its colony of believers. Immediately other groups began arriving ... Puritans, Calvinists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Baptists. These groups founded the basic principles of the United States government based on belief in Jesus Christ. French and Spanish imperialism brought Catholicism to the “New World”.

Yet despite the great gains that this Church made, the Lord rebuked it in His message to it. (Revelation 3:1-6) He said, *I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.* This Church has gone to sleep on its reputation. It was much like the actual city of Sardis, which was an almost impregnable fortress-citadel, towering above the Hermus valley and nearly surrounded by precipitous cliffs of treacherously loose rock. Yet it was conquered twice and both Cyrus and Antiochus the Great did it the same way. They breached an **undefended** portion of the wall. From this it is evident that the people of the city had gone to **sleep**. They thought they could not be conquered and feeling safe did not **defend** their weaknesses.

Jesus cautioned the Church to: *Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent.* In other words, “Quit sleeping and exercise your faith to **reform** yourselves. Originally, you recognized what was wrong with the Church, you repented of its deeds and **reformed** that which was wrong, therefore continue to allow yourselves to be **transformed**.”

- The Great Church Debate - Calvinism versus Arminianism

Calvinism and Arminianism are two systems of theology that attempt to explain the relationship between **God's sovereignty** and **man's responsibility** in the matter of **salvation**. The Synod of Dort²⁵ met from November 1618 to May 1619 to resolve these issues. Arminius was condemned.

²⁵ A synod is a council or an assembly of church officials or churches.

The synod spelled out its theology in several canons and these became the heart of Calvinist orthodoxy. The essence of the synod's teachings is referred to as TULIP theology after the first letters in the key doctrines:

Total depravity
Unconditional election
Limited atonement
Irresistible grace
Perseverance of the saints

Both theological positions contained five points and are briefly explained below:

1. **Total depravity** means that because of Adam's fall humans are totally bound to sin. Even if some "light" exists in the world, humans are incapable of responding to it.
 - a. **Partial depravity** states that every aspect of humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that human beings are unable to place faith in God of their own accord.
2. **Unconditional election** means that being elected by God is predestined. It is not based on God's foreknowledge of who will respond to the call for salvation.
 - a. **Conditional election** states that God elects individuals to salvation based on His foreknowledge of who will believe in Christ unto salvation, thereby on the condition that the individual chooses God.
3. **Limited atonement** teaches that Christ died only for the elect, not for all humankind.
 - a. **Unlimited atonement** is the belief that Jesus died for all, but that His death is not effectual until a person receives Him by faith.
4. **Irresistible grace** goes back to the teachings of Augustine, as do many ideas surrounding predestination. It holds that predestination is so powerful it is impossible for people to resist the grace of God once it is given to them.
 - a. **Resistible grace** states that God calls all to salvation, but that many people resist and reject this call.
5. **Perseverance of the saints** means that once a person is saved he or she cannot be lost. It is impossible to fall from grace.
 - a. **Conditional salvation** is the view that a believer in Christ can, of his/her own free will, turn away from Christ and reject their salvation.

So, in the Calvinism vs. Arminianism debate, who is correct? It is interesting to note that in the diversity of the body of Christ, there are all sorts of mixtures of Calvinism and Arminianism. It seems to me that two great facts cannot be ignored:

1. God is absolutely **sovereign** and **knows all**, and
2. Human beings are **called** to make a **genuine decision** to place faith in Christ unto salvation.

- The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia -

The Meaning of the Name: “Brotherly love”

Revelation: *He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens.* Christ holds the key to the entrance of heaven and has authority to run God’s kingdom.

Commendation: *I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 'Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 'Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.*

1. This Church does not have clout ... it's not a great institution and does not count on the power of the State to assist it.
2. You have kept my word, *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”*
3. *You have not denied My Name.* This Church holds that through Jesus Christ alone comes salvation.
4. An open door is before you.
 - a. You can come into the Father’s presence anytime you want 24 hours a day ... the door is always open for you.
 - b. Bring your friends over ... the door is always open for you.
 - c. Bring those who need shelter into the house ... the door is always open for you.
 - d. Do you need something that is in the house? Come on in ... the door is always open for you.
 - e. Are you tired of working in the fields? Come on in ... the door is always open for you.
 - f. Do you want to go out into the fields? Go ahead ... the door is always open for you.
5. People who say they are Jews and are not will bow at your feet and they will know that you are my children. The apostle Paul wrote, *“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”*
6. You will be kept from the hour of testing. Christ will keep this church from being deceived.

Criticism: None

Instruction: *I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. Keep doing what you are doing don't let anyone cause you to change.*

Penalty: None

Promise: *I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

1. If you overcome, though you have little strength, I will make you as strong as a pillar.
2. You will always remain in My presence and never go out into the fields to work again.
3. The world may not know who you are now but:
 - a. You will be known as God's children.
 - b. You will be known as citizens of heaven.
 - c. You will be known as belonging to the lamb.

- The Missionary Age - 1726- 1948 AD

The Missionary Age began with the coming of the Great Awakening in 1726 and ended with the formation of the nation, Israel ... the nation born in one day. *Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.* (Isaiah 66:8)

In the "parable of the treasure in the field" a man discovers a **treasure** hidden in a field then sells everything he has and buys the **field**. This characterizes the Missionary Age Church, which went looking for godly **treasure** and found it. They sold everything they had to work in **mission fields** looking for the **treasure** hidden in the hearts of men ... faith towards God. *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls.* (Proverbs 11:30)

The Missionary Age is filled with **revival** (renewal) and **missions** (spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world). People enter through the door to be in the presence of God to be refreshed and to enjoy Him. They went out the door into the harvest field of the world to sow the seeds of life and to bring in the harvest of souls.

Some of those who had been asleep in Sardis were **awakened**. The Great Awakening experienced in America began in 1726 and has been followed by several other **renewals** such as the Welsh Revival and Azusa Street. People opened their hearts to God, to worship Him and then to be used by Him. This **love** for God sparked people to go onto **mission fields** in record numbers, literally taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. Intense **love** for one's fellow man spurred people to heroic deeds: converting people to faith in Christ and challenging social evils and issues of the day.

A pattern for missionary work was developed:

- Closely relate Church and school. Teach new Christians to read and understand the Bible.
- Translate the Bible as quickly as possible into the native tongue.
- Try to understand the culture and mindset of the local people.
- Emphasize personal conversion and set high standards for church membership.
- Quickly train local ministers to become leaders.

The city of Philadelphia is located 28 miles SE of Sardis and 50 miles E of Smyrna in western Asia Minor (Turkey). Eumenes, king of Pergamum, founded the city in the 2nd century BC. He named it in honor of his brother Attalus, whose loyalty earned him the nickname, Philadelphus. The area is subject to earthquakes and a major one destroyed the city in 17 AD. It was rebuilt by the Romans and given the name Neocaesarea and then in the reign of Vespasian it was renamed Flavia. Ignatius visited the city on his way from Antioch to martyrdom in Rome in 117 AD and sent a letter to the church there. Philadelphia fell into the hands of the Turks in 1379 AD and today it is named Alasehir “City of God”.

- Famous Evangelists and Missionaries -

- George Whitfield
- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)
- John Wesley (1703-1791)
- Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
- David Brainerd (1718-1747) North American Indians
- William Carey (1761-1834) India
- Adoniram Judson (1788-1850) Burma
- Charles G. Finney (1792-1875)
- David Livingston (1813-1873) Africa
- Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) China
- Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1897)
- Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899)
- C.T. Studd (1860-1931) Central Africa
- Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) India
- Gladys Aylward (1902-1970) China - The movie “Inn of the Sixth Happiness” is her story.
- Eric Liddell (1902-1945) China - He is the main hero of the movie “Chariots of Fire”.
- Billy Graham (1918- 201?)
- Jim Elliot (1927-1956) Ecuador

- The Pentecostals and Charismatics -

Pentecostalism is a movement that gets its name from the New Testament outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4) Pentecostals emphasize direct contact with the Spirit of God that results in receiving spiritual gifts. One of the most desired gifts is speaking in tongues, which is seen as a sure sign of the outpouring of the Spirit. Pentecostals also are characterized by a strict morality, and emphasis on missions and evangelism, and a belief in healing by faith alone.

Pentecostalism developed out of the nineteenth-century Holiness movement, which was comprised of Christians who believed in the possibility of complete sanctification or sinless living. Holiness tendencies were found in many denominations, but were especially strong in Methodism because of Wesley's stress on sanctification.

Direct outpourings of the spirit were experienced within many nineteenth-century Holiness groups. In the early twentieth century, moderates within the movement moved away from the emotional, ecstatic experiences while retaining the holiness emphasis. These formed into groups like the Church of the Nazarene. More radical believers continued to stress the direct experience of the Spirit and formed such Pentecostal groups as the Assemblies of God. The Holiness movement remained scattered in a number of relatively small denominations. However, the Pentecostals have been remarkably successful at rural and urban evangelism. Their missionaries have spread their version of the Gospel to other lands. They have been very successful in Latin and South America.

A different phase of Pentecostalism began in the 1960's with the emergence of the charismatic movement. Charismatics seek the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. However, most charismatics stayed within their own denominations and tried to renew their denominations through spirit-filled worship. At the same time, they often participated in ecumenical events with charismatics from other denominations. Almost all denominations, including Catholics, now have a charismatic element.

- Selected Quotations -

God's Call:

You will not have to worry about an "opening" in the foreign field; usually there are thousands of miles of "opening" and you can take your choice as to where you will establish yourself. – **Robert Savage**

Voices of Opposition:

The man ... looking at him with a smile that only half concealed his contempt, inquired, "Now, Mr. Morrison, do you really expect that you will make an impression on the idolatry of the Chinese empire?" "No sir," said Morrison, "but I expect God will." – **Robert Morrison**

Remember the miller's donkey ... the miller, son and donkey went to the market. The miller rode the donkey all the way and people exclaimed, "Cruel man, riding himself and making his son walk." So he got down and his son rode; then people slanged, "What a lazy son for riding while poor old father walks." Then both father and son rode, and people then said, "Cruelty to animals, poor donkey." So they got down and carried the donkey on a pole, but folks said, "Here are two asses carrying another ass." Then all three walked and people said, "What fools to have a donkey and not ride it." So let's go ahead with our work for God and not care what folks say. – **C.T. Studd**

Commitment:

I have this minute in my control. It is all I really do have to work with; none that went before, none that shall come in the future – only this minute until it has flashed by and gone ... It is as magnificent or drab or vile as the thoughts which fill it ... I fear our most common sin is empty minutes... - **Frank Laubach**

Language and Culture:

The greatest missionary is the Bible in the mother tongue. It never needs a furlough, is never considered a foreigner. – **William Cameron Townsend**

People say that we must adopt the language and culture of the day to be relevant today. That is a mistake. If the Church marries itself to the spirit of the times, it will be a widow in the next generation. There is a universal language – the language of reality and the language of love. – **E. Stanley Jones**

Strategy:

The best leaders are grown, not grabbed. – **Clarence W. Jones**

Proclaim the Word more and argue about it less. – **William Cameron Townsend**

It is very unwise to present to the people a one-sided truth – I mean to tell them only of a God of love. They are constantly in bondage of fear because of the evil spirits, and a God of love does not make strong appeal. They are far more attracted to such truths as the power and greatness of God, the absolute justice of Jehovah and His wrath toward sin. – **Johanna Veenstra**

Prepare for the worst; expect the best, and take what comes. – **Robert E. Speer**

Discouragement:

Joy and sorrow travel together. – **Malla Moe**

My life is lived so much among unlovely and unlovable people that I have learned to have great sympathy and great love for them. – **Eleanor Chestnut**

Part of the heartache of all missionary work is the bright promising convert who turns out to be a mere puffball, crumbling like a macaroon under the least pressure. – **Isobel Kuhn**

Prayer:

The trouble with nearly everybody who prays is that he says “Amen” and runs away before God has a chance to reply. Listening to God is far more important than giving Him your ideas. – **Frank Laubach**

Praying without faith is like trying to cut with a blunt knife – much labor expended to little purpose. – **James O. Fraser**

Family:

Marriage can be a great blessing or a great curse, depending upon where you place the Cross. – **C.T. Studd**

Evangelism:

It has been well for me to remember, when speaking to others, that I am a dying man speaking to dying souls. – **T.J. Bach**

What are we here for, to have a good time with the Christians or to save sinners? – **Malla Moe**

We have all eternity to tell of the victories won for Christ, but we have only a few hours before sunset to win them. – **Anonymous**

Humor:

A good thing to have up your sleeve is a sanctified funny bone. **C.T. Studd**

It's amazing what can be accomplished if you don't worry about who gets the credit. – **Clarence W. Jones**

God loves a cheerful giver and everyone likes to be loved. – **Malla Moe**

Let the head grow wise, but keep the heart always young and playful. – **David Livingstone**

Protection and Providence:

The safest place for yourself and the children is in the path of duty. – **Jonathan Goforth**

Two distinguishing marks of the early church were: (1) Poverty; (2) Power. - **T.J. Bach**

God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies. – **J. Hudson Taylor**

If we are going to wait until every possible hindrance has been removed before we do the work of the Lord, we will never attempt to do anything. – **T.J. Bach**

Wants are things we think we need; necessities are things God knows we need. God will supply our needs, not our wants. – **T.J. Bach**

Loneliness:

Shall I tell you what sustained me amidst the toil, the hardship, the loneliness of my exiled life? It was the promise, "Lo I am with always, even to the end." – **David Livingstone**

Supernatural Power:

Whatever else you fail of, do not fail the influences of the Holy Spirit; that is the only way you can handle the consciences of men. – **David Brainard**

I do not know how ... to make a man think seriously about sin and judgment, and must look to the work of the Holy Sprit for ... any hint of such working. – **Jim Elliot**

Character:

OBEDIENCE to God's will is the secret of spiritual knowledge and insight. It is not willingness to know, but willingness to DO God's will that brings certainty. – **Eric Liddell**

Do not be sensitive. Perhaps you are by nature, but you can get over it with the exercise of common sense and the help of God. Let things hurt until the tender spot gets callous. Believe that people do not intend to be unkind; some are too busy to think of the feelings of their fellow-workers, and others have not the nice discernment that ought to guide even the busy brain and tongue, Sensitiveness is only another kind of self-consciousness, and as such we should seek deliverance from its irritating power. - **Isabella Thoburn**

Warfare – Within and Without:

The only person who does not believe that the Devil is a person is someone who has never attempted to combat him or his ways ... The simple tribesman going through his animistic incantations is wiser than such a drugged intellectual. He, at least knows there is a Devil; and he has ways to appease him temporarily. – **Isobel Kuhn**

I have ever found it, when I thought the battle was over and the conquest gained, and so let down my watch, the enemy has risen up and done me the greatest injury. – **David Brainerd**

Tension does some good things. A reasonable number of fleas is good for a dog. It keeps him from brooding over being a dog. – **Clarence W. Jones**

The devil does not care how many hospitals we build ... if only he can pull our ideals down, and sidetrack us. – **Amy Carmichael**

Faith:

It is a tragedy when a man has no invisible means of support. – **T.J. Bach**

The use of means ought not to lessen our faith in God, and our faith in God ought not to hinder our using whatever means He has given us for the accomplishment of His own purposes. –**J. Hudson Taylor**

Friends are saying to me, “What are people who are living by faith going to do when money gets tight and depression comes?” The thought came to me that the real question is, “What are people who are not living by faith going to do?” – **Joy Ridderhof**

The eagle that soars in the upper air does not worry itself how it is to cross rivers. – **Gladys Aylward**

The more obstacles you have, the more opportunities there are for God to do something. – **Clarence W. Jones**

God’s part is to put forth His power; our part is to put forth faith. –**Andrew A. Bonar**

... I never prayed sincerely or earnestly for anything, but it came. At some time, no matter how distant a day, somehow, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, it came. And yet I have always had so little faith. May God forgive me ... and cleanse the sin of unbelief from my heart. – **J. Hudson Taylor**

I belong to the Church and she has plenty of time. – **Charles de Foucauld**

When God’s finger points, God’s hand will open the door. _ **Clarence W. Jones**

But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One. **J. Hudson Taylor**

Philosophy of Ministry:

There is a real relationship between Christian missions and social progress but to confound the two or make them co-ordinate is fatal. – **Samuel M. Zwemer**

We have a whole Christ for our salvation; a whole Bible for our staff; a whole Church for our fellowship; and a whole world for our parish. – **John Chrysostom**

Sacrifice and Reward:

When we arrived in 1937 there were no doctors, no hospitals, no drugstores, no aeroplanes. There was just one boat every ten days, weather permitting. But there were 900 Indians and 1100 others, mostly miners and fishermen, in our area. We needed tools to serve these souls and God gave them to us. But first He gave us a burden, then the people, then the means. – **Dr. McClean**

Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God’s plans, but God *is not helpless among the ruins*. Our broken lives are not lost or useless. God’s love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously, working out His wonderful plan of love. – **Eric Liddell**

- The Letter to the Church at Laodicea -

The Meaning of the Name: “The people ruling or speaking” or “the judgment of the people” or “human rights”.

Revelation: *The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.* Christ is the one who has the final word.

Commendation: None

Criticism: *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. You are lukewarm. This Church is apathetic and self satisfied but not satisfying to Christ. It is far from its source, either a hot spring or cold spring, which is why it is lukewarm. It exists only for itself, blends with the world and is meaningless to others. It doesn't provide refreshment by being cold, to those who are hot and thirsty or by being hot, to those who are cold and in need of healing.*

Instruction: *Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.*

1. Change the way you think. You think you have become rich because you base wealth on what you think has value. But I am the source of true wealth for the Church. You have even shut Me (The Word of God) out of my own house (the Church).
2. You trust in your gold to be successful but you need My work on the cross to deliver you. (Faith)
3. You trust in your clothes to adorn your body but you need my righteousness to cover you. (Hope)
4. You trust in your eyes to lead you but you are in need of My Spirit to guide you. (Love)
5. Because I love you, I will reprove you (show you what is wrong) and discipline you (teach you what is correct). Therefore, return to Me so you can acquire what you need. I want you to love Me and will be glad to share My love with you if you desire it.

Penalty: *So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.* You will not have any part in Me if you do not return to Me.

Promise: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His*

throne. I will share everything that is Mine with you. Everything in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

- The Knowledgeable Age - 1948 – The Second Coming of Christ

The Knowledgeable Age began with the formation of the nation, Israel ... the nation born in one day. It ends with the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of The Millennial Age in which Christ reigns from Jerusalem, the “City Of Peace.”

The Knowledgeable Age of the Church should be of particular interest to Christians today since its characteristics mark the “age” in which we currently live. In the book of Daniel it says, “*But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase*” (Daniel 12:4). Today the words of Daniel are being revealed and with the change from an agrarian culture to a **business** environment people are traveling back and forth as never before even world-wide. That **knowledge**²⁶ is increasing cannot be doubted. With the invention of radio, TV, the computer and the internet, society has access to **information** almost instantaneously.

Interestingly this “age” is marked by the “parable of the pearl of great price.” For the first time the kingdom parables’ focus changes from things associated with the land to those associated with a **merchant**. The parable reads this way, “*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*” (Matthew 13:45-46)

The parable of the pearl of great price establishes the fact that the kingdom of God²⁷ is the most **valuable** thing that anyone can possess. A **merchant** is one who makes a living from **buying** and **selling**. He is a savvy **businessman** and knows the **value** of his merchandise. When he finds the most **valuable** thing that he can possess, he **sells** everything he owns to obtain it. At the moment of purchase the merchant is out of business, he has nothing more to **barter** with. What would be the sense in selling the pearl of great price to obtain other pearls of less value again? He then has a choice: 1) to be a **collector**, who does not use his pearl to **profit** himself or 2) an **investor**, who uses it to **profit** through investment in others. According to Job the greatest thing that a person can invest in is **wisdom**. “*Coral and crystal are not to be mentioned; and the acquisition of wisdom is above that of pearls.*” (Job 28:18) He concludes that true **wisdom** is the fear (reverence and respect) of the Lord and to depart from evil is **understanding**.

The Lord uses the message to the Church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) to instruct Christians living in the “Knowledgeable Age.” The name Laodicea means “The people ruling or speaking” or “the judgment of the people” or “human **rights**.” Whichever name is used this Church is characterized by people doing what is **right** in their own **eyes** not what God asks of them. Jesus Christ is put out of the Church and its members become the source of its direction.

²⁶ It should be noticed that the angel did not mention either **wisdom** or **understanding** in his instruction.

²⁷ The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Laodicea is located eighty miles east of Ephesus in the valley of the Lycus River a tributary of the Meander. Colossae lies to the east about 12 miles. The Apostle Paul wrote a letter mentioned in Colossians 4:16 to Laodicea that was to be circulated among the churches. Many scholars believe that the letter mentioned is the one we call Ephesians.

The city itself was founded by Antiochus II in the 3rd century BC and named for his wife. Laodicea lies at a major crossroads of the trade route from the interior to the coastal towns and was both a commercial center, specializing in **garments** of glossy black wool and a medical center noted for **ophthalmology**. Water had to be piped from a hot springs some distance south and arrived **lukewarm**. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 66 AD and rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius. Today it is merely a ruin called Eski-hissar meaning “Old Castle” probably because it was built on top of a flat-topped hill. Actually the city itself **moved** to the south, at the site of the **hot springs** and is now called Denizli.

The Lord has no praise for this Church and in His message to it offers only stern criticism. *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot.* You are **lukewarm**. This Church is apathetic and self satisfied but not satisfying to Christ. It is far from its source, either a hot spring or cold spring, which is why it is lukewarm. It exists only for itself, blends with the world and is meaningless to others. It doesn't provide refreshment by being cold, to those who are hot and thirsty or by being hot, to those who are cold and in need of healing. Since this Church relates to **merchants**, who should know the true **value** of things, Jesus offers it hope with the **instruction** on how to get out of the predicament

- Unity in the Body of Christ -

Whenever people have been encouraged to think for themselves, there has been church division. Where two or three are gathered together, you're likely to have four or five opinions.

The Bible speaks of the oneness of believers, but it also speaks of the need to hold onto truth. Many reformers, as we have seen, have grabbed for the truth and as a result broke away from churches they considered false. Others, such as Alexander Campbell and John Nelson Darby, stood up against petty church divisions in the name of church unity. But unfortunately, their ideas of truth were challenged, too, and the unity they sought was never realized. “Speaking the truth in love” is never easy to do.

In 1910, John R. Mott and his associates began working on developing church unity through world evangelism efforts. Largely due to Mott's efforts the World Council of Churches (WCC) was formed in 1948 with 135 church bodies, from 40 different nations.

Describing itself as “a fellowship of churches which accept Jesus Christ our Lord as God and Savior,” the WCC called churches to work together, study together, fellowship together, worship together, and meet together in special conferences from time to time. It denied any plans to form a new “world church.” It would not have centralized power. It merely aimed to give churches around the world the opportunity and resources to cooperate with each other. However many conservatives have attacked the WCC's “revolutionary” mind-set.

In October 1962, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council, which would bring sweeping reform to the Roman Catholic Church. In addressing the clergy, Pope John pointed out the growth of materialism and atheism and commented that in a world in spiritual crisis, the church must not respond by withdrawing or condemning others. It must “rule with the medicine of mercy rather than severity.”

Some of the reforms that came out of that Council were:

- As a result of Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church renounced its power over the political realm.
- Instead of Latin, native tongues were to be the language of the mass.
- Both clergy and laypeople were accepted as the people of God and could share in ministerial functions.
- It also declared that not only was the pope a successor to the apostles but that all bishops shared apostolic authority.
- Vatican II emphasized that Scripture, not tradition, was the primary basis of divine truth. However it did not overturn any long-held traditions.
- The Council gave the Bible more importance and encouraged all Catholics, laypeople and scholars, to study the Bible.

In Vatican II’s decree “On Ecumenism,” dramatic change took place concerning attitudes towards non-Catholics. Those in other denominations were stated to be Christians, “separated brethren,” ending the idea that “Christian” equated with “Catholic.” Other believers did not need to “return” to Rome.

Response to Vatican II was mixed. Some of the hierarchy objected to the changes and debated them hotly. Some conservative Catholics objected to the new course of the church, but many more Catholics, and many non-Catholics, experienced great hope for the church. Vatican II had opened some doors between denominations and encouraged serious Bible study in an unprecedented way.

There is always a hope held in the heart of Christians for true unity in the Church but until that occurs it might be wise for each of us to consider this often quoted line:

**In essentials’ unity
In disputable matters, liberty
And in all things, charity**

- Who Is an Over Comer? -

1 John 5:4-5: For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Rev 12:11: And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death

