

Mike Attwood

Church History Curriculum

Part 1

The Seven Churches of Asia Minor

Revelation 2-3

Introduction

These Churches have been viewed by Bible Scholars in three different aspects.

1. Letters written to Seven Churches at that time, with local relevance.
2. An overview of the conditions in Christendom, at any given time. Currently we have a persecuted Church in China, Sudan, Indonesia and Muslim Lands, An Ecumenical Super Church and here in North America a worldly Church. etc.
3. Seen as Prophetic and tracing the history of the Church from Pentecost to the Rapture and the false Church even after the Rapture ! See **Rev.1:3** [the whole book is prophetic.

"I have no doubt that this series of Churches applies as history to the moral successive state of the whole Church: the first four to the history of the Church at Rome from its first decline to its present condition in popery: the last three are the history of Protestantism." JND

This makes an interesting study in conjunction with the Seven Feasts of Jehovah in **Leviticus 23**, Which are clearly prophetic and trace the history of Israel from the Passover to the Millennium or from the Cross to the Crown.

Also **Matthew 13** "The Seven Kingdom Parables" which trace the history of the Kingdom of God from the Rejection of the King until his universal Kingdom is established.

Therefore when we combine the three we have God's complete program revealed for Israel, the Church and the Kingdom of God.

TE Wilson – considers these as an essential framework for understanding the Scriptures. I would add to that the Seven Dispensations and the Covenants of Scripture!

A Prophetic Overview of the Church.

A Church history curriculum written in advance, by the all-knowing God.

If time travel was possible, Imagine NT Saints like Tychicus, Gaius and Secundus visiting the Churches in your town for a year. What would they think? What would they say? I

suspect they would wonder how we got from where they came from to where we are! The answer is found in Church History!

Or How we got into the mess we are in today, when you read your New Testament and then compare what is written concerning the Church to what we see in Christendom today we are right to ask ourselves the question "What happened". Where did all these denominations come from? Where did the idea of Popes, prelates, robes and ritualism come from?

Church History is a bit like Israel's History –Departure and Recovery.

Bibliography

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The Christian Testimony through the Ages. T.W. Carron. Pickering & Inglis.
Church History in Plain Language. Bruce L. Shelley. Word.
Miller's Church History -Andrew Miller. Bible Truth Publishers.
Christianity Through the Centuries. Earle E. Cairns. Zondervan

Ephesus [Beloved or desired] **Rev 2:1-7**

The Backsliding Church
Pentecost - 100 AD

Salient feature - Leaving of first love.

Only Church where Apostles are mentioned, even though they are false apostles! :2, therefore directed to Apostolic or early Church. Remember the Apostles were foundational.
Ephesians 2:20

Rapid Gospel Expansion.

The Gospel spread from Jerusalem to Britain, North Africa which was 80% Christian, Turkey, France [Gaul].

100 AD .0017 % of the Population –approx. 10,000 Believers.

300 AD 10.5% of the Population –Approximately 6 Million.

Why such rapid expansion?

"The Fullness of the times." – Roman Roads 50K miles of straight roads
Pax Romana –Law & Order and strong government.
The Greek Language
Disillusionment with Paganism & Greek Philosophy –Did not satisfy – A Spiritual Hunger!
Today –Modern Culture cannot satisfy –**Jeremiah 2:13**

Contrast :2 with **1 Thess 1:3**

Work - of Faith
Labor - of Love
Patience - of hope

Doing the same things, the difference was motivation. Could be a labor of duty or drudgery or of habit.

The penetrating eyes see the motives of the heart - his verdict, they had left there first love. How disappointing this must have been to the Lord. They had ceased to delight in His love for them and hence their own love for Him had declined, this Activity is no replacement for intimacy!

John 21:15-17. 1 Cor.14:37 /John 14:15

In less than a hundred years from the day of Pentecost the gospel had penetrated into most of the provinces of the Roman Empire, and was widely diffused in many of them.

Managed to keep heresy largely at bay.

Tried them that say they are apostles and are not!

The Rise of Nicolaitianism.

Nicolaitans - the conquering of the people.

Nikao - to Conquer

Laos- the People or laity

God hates it, it usurps the pre-eminence of Christ. **1 Peter 5:1-4. Col 1:18** He commends them as they hated the deeds, men like Diotrophes were already arising up. **3 John 9, 10**

Ignatius AD35-AD 107

One of that number that are known as the Apostolic Fathers including Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius and Barnabas, they were the immediate followers of the inspired apostles.

Had known several of the apostles. Was the Bishop of Antioch and was martyred in Rome, being dragged to Rome as fast as possible to be thrown to the lions during the last day of the games. Episcopalianism looks to his writings to justify their system of bishops etc.

He gives to the bishop a prominence and authority unknown in the New Testament.

Commenting on **Acts 20:17&:28** he says that Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the bishops and presbyters, thus making two titles of one description, and says they were from Ephesus and neighboring cities, thus obscuring the fact that the one church, Ephesus, had several overseers or bishops.

Extracts from his writings.

To the Church at Ephesus.

“Let us take heed, brethren, that we set not ourselves against the bishop, that we might be subject to God.....It is therefore evident that we ought to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself.”

To the Magnesians.

“I exhort you that ye study to all things in a divine concord; your bishops presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons, not dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.”

But not until the end of the apostolic age did the monarchical bishop become established fully.

counsel - Repentance needed, repentance always precedes revival, lack of repentance always precedes judgment.