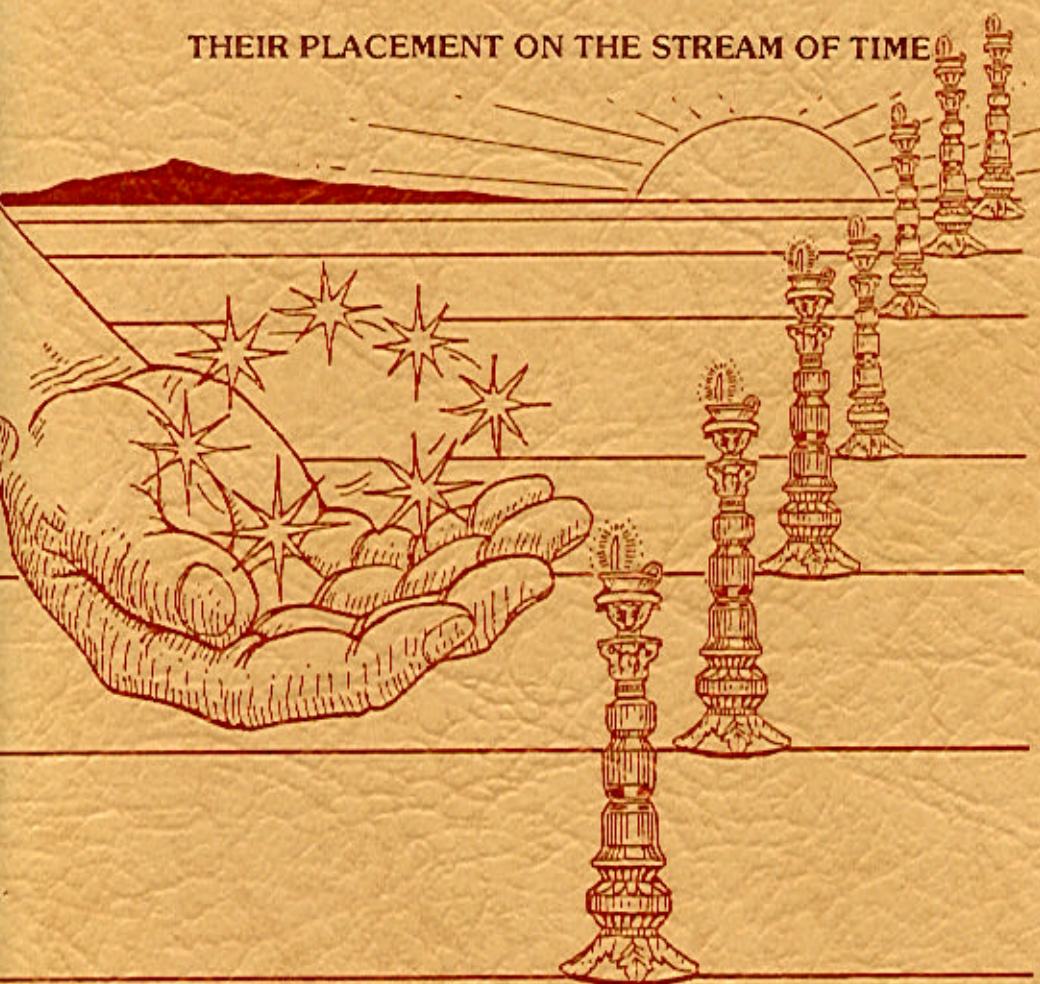


# The Seven Churches of Revelation

THEIR PLACEMENT ON THE STREAM OF TIME



Charles F. Redeker

## **THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION**

*"...I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man ... And he had in his right hand seven stars...*

*"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore... The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks:*

*"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

Rev. 1: 12-20

By the **same author:**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD, 1961

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS, 1%3

SACRIFICE IN THE PLAN OF GOD, 1967

A CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUE BIBLE CHRONOLOGY, 1971

FOREGLEAMS OF THE MESSIAH, 1982

THE BIBLICAL PROPHETIC YEAR, 1983

# **THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION**

**THEIR PLACEMENT ON THE STREAM OF TIME**

Based on:

**Prophetic Character of the Messages**

**Identity of the Special Messengers**

**Key Events of Church History**

**Charles F. Redeker**

**1989**

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## Introduction

The seven churches of Revelation, as described in chapters two and three of that Book, have intrigued Bible expositors down through the age. Were the messages to these churches intended mainly for the congregations to which they were sent during the apostolic period? Were they intended to be instructive in a general way to the church worldwide in every period of its development? Or were they actually prophetic of Seven Historical Ages of the church, with each successive stage reflecting the conditions and characteristics ascribed to the original churches?

Most believers have concluded that truth is found in all these possibilities: that the messages were designed for the original congregations, as well as generally throughout the age, and chronologically through seven major periods of church history. Nevertheless, the latter view seems to receive particular emphasis from the widely held belief that the Book of Revelation is a forecast of unfolding church history, both good and bad, of the false church as well as the true, from the apostle's day all the way to the end of the age. This conception views the Book as a panorama of colorful pictures portraying the successive development of the church through struggles in a hostile world, near extinction by the rise of apostate elements, gradual recovery to an active role, and a final triumph after tumultuous end-time experiences.

Such an historical interpretation of the theme of Revelation, which has held almost universal sway until just recent times, neatly complements the particular view of the seven churches representing seven distinct stages in the development of the church. It also serves to heighten the expectation of the Bible student to find substantiation for such an understanding in a correlation of the pages of history with the apocalyptic utterances.

It has been pointed out by church historians that many, if not most, of the various expositors of the prophecies who lived throughout the Christian era, applied the messages of the seven churches to progressive stages of church history. For example, L. E. Froom, in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, wrote:

"...hundreds of students of prophecy down through the centuries [taught] that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 represent the condition of the church during the various periods comprising the Christian Era—as Ephesus, for the apostolic age; Sardis, in the eighteenth century; and Laodicea, the 'remnant' church at the end of the age." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. IV, p. 1144.

He stated further that in the post-Reformation period, there was " virtual universal acceptance" by prophetic expositors of "the seven churches, seals, and trumpets [as] covering the Christian Era [of historical development]." <sup>2</sup>

E. B. Elliott, who is considered to be a leading historicist of the 19th century, could not himself accept the progressive aspect of the messages. Yet he was quite willing to acknowledge that such a view was indeed held "by not a few commentators," both in former ages and in his day. <sup>3</sup>

R. E. Streeter, in his work on Revelation, wrote:

"We again emphasize the fact of the very wide and general application of the [messages of the seven churches] to all the generations of the Church's history, both individually and collectively. However, the facts of history themselves have proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the peculiar characteristics described of each of these Churches, fit exactly seven distinct, successive epochs of the history of the Church in the order mentioned, which establishes the prophetic character of the messages themselves; in the measure that we become familiar with the history of these seven epochs, we will be able to see a most remarkable fulfilment of the messages. Their prophetic character has been recognized by many, if not by nearly all of the expositors who have written on the Revelation for the past two centuries." <sup>4</sup>

From statements such as these, it appears evident that a sizeable number of students of Revelation through the centuries have recognized the prophetic and progressive aspect of the messages. Nevertheless, there is no excitement or satisfaction of intellect that can match individual discovery of facts. This raised the challenge of finding a way to permit the average interested reader to scan the pages of church history and test the thesis that there was indeed a recognizable pattern of events that made up seven distinct eras.

The method settled upon was to construct a table of key events of church history, so organized as to compare the highlights of sequential events with the character of the messages to the churches. Thus Table A permits such a ready comparison: The first column summarizes the message to each church and gives the commonly accepted definition for its name; the middle column provides a brief biographical sketch of the individual most generally selected as the messenger ("angel," special teacher or overseer) for each period; and the last column summarizes key events that transpired in the two thousand year history of the church.

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<sup>2</sup> From, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> E. B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> R. E. Streeter, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Vol. 1, p. 112.

It should be understood that the placement of events on each sheet of Table A is not intended to correspond precisely with the messenger and church of that period. Rather, it is merely an arrangement that makes it convenient for the reader to exercise his own judgment in recognizing any possible correlations, as discussed above.

In Section Two, Tables B and C were constructed in a more specific way to show how selected Bible expositors of the past and present have correlated these events. Table B offers the condensed views of earlier authorities, while Table C and its supplement summarize those of contemporary Bible Students. The reader will note various areas of similarity and concurrence and the emergence of a majority or traditional view. (Our own comments and views are reserved -for the closing section.)

And finally, a summary table and chart were drawn to approximate the placement of the seven churches and their messengers on the stream of history. These represent a composite of the traditional views and provide a quick visual reference for the reader.

We trust that this arrangement of material will offer new insights and encouragements along these lines:

- (a) Highlighting the praises, admonitions and special promises to the churches.
- (b) Reviewing the lives of certain defenders of the faith who were raised up by God during critical times in the development of the church.
- (c) Condensing the key events of church history that occurred over the long span of the Gospel Age to permit trends and developments to be noted which might otherwise be obscured.
- (d) Appreciating the dramatic correlation of Bible time prophecies with specific, datable events of history.
- (e) Noting the relative lengths of the seven stages of the church during the Gospel Age and the placement of the ministries of the messengers within those periods.
- (f) And lastly, underscoring the thrilling reality and significance of our present position in the seventh and final stage of the church-living at the threshold of the full establishment of the long-promised Kingdom of God.

**Section One -  
Characteristics of the  
Seven Churches, Messengers,  
and Key Events of  
Church History**



**Table A: Churches, Messengers, and Key Events of Church History**

<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<b>1. Ephesus</b>	<b>Apostle Paul</b>
(Rev. 2:1-7)	(d. 64 AD)
<p>Name means: "First, desirable."  Mingled praise and blame: the believers labored tirelessly in spreading the gospel and did not grow weary in their truth activities. They patiently endured suffering for Christ and opposed wicked men and imposters (those claiming the authority of the original apostles). They were especially commended for detesting the Nicolaitanes (those promoting a clergy class, with varying degrees of honor and lordship, contrary to the divine arrangement).</p> <p>Nevertheless they were charged with having lost their first love for the Lord (implying some loss of energy and zeal for the truth). They were strongly urged to repent and to recover their enthusiasm and early works (including a spirit of total dedication to the Lord). Unless repentant, they were warned that their candlestick (privilege of being light-bearers) would be removed from its place.</p> <p>The overcomer was promised he would eat of the tree of life, in the midst of the paradise of God (to partake of life eternal in the glorious estate of close association with God).</p>	<p>Brilliant converted Pharisee who became the apostle to the Gentiles, the greatest logician of the Christian faith and the mainstay of the early church. His birth as a Roman citizen, knowledge of Greek culture and training in orthodox Judaism afforded a providential background for his special ministry. He was of keen intellect, tremendous drive, lofty principle and impeccable integrity.</p> <p>He fiercely persecuted the earliest Christians until miraculously converted by a glimpse of the risen Christ (Acts 9:3-7, 26, 27); then was chosen to bear the Lord's name before the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Along with Barnabas, he became the first missionary, beginning in Cyprus and later throughout most of the Mediterranean world. He preached with boldness and energy and endured much suffering and opposition (2 Cor. 11:23-28). Employing <b>his</b> skills as orator and teacher with tact and insight, he won many converts to Christ.</p> <p>Paul became burdened with the care of all the churches and diligently promoted their unity and welfare (Eph. 4:1-7, 11-15). He was given special visions by God (2 Cor. 12:1-7) and was recognized as functioning with divine authority (Gal. 2:6-9). He authored most of the New Testament books, setting forth the basics of Christian belief and practice. He taught that salvation was by the grace of God, made possible by faith in Christ and his atoning sacrifice (Rom. 1:16; 5:1,2). His outstanding achievements firmly planted Christianity in the Greco-Roman world and furnished it with much of its essential biblical foundation.</p>

# **Table A: Churches, Messengers, and Key Events of Church History**

## ***Historical Events***

33 AD - Pentecost: Holy Spirit descended upon believers in Jerusalem. 35 - Saul of Tarsus converted on way to Damascus.

36 - Gospel first preached to Gentiles (but still spread largely among Jews).

40 - Antioch Church took lead in spreading Gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews.

44 - Martyrdom of James by King Herod Agrippa 1.

47-49 - Paul's first missionary journey. Sent out from Antioch with Bamabas to Cyprus and Asia Minor.

49 - Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome to quell disturbance arising from disputations about Jesus. Christianity gained foothold in city.

50 - Jerusalem conference of Peter, Paul, James, Bamabas and others. Lifted circumcision and other requirements of Jewish Law from Gentile believers.

51-53 - Paul's second journey. With Silas and later Timothy, he established churches throughout Greece: Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth.

53-56 - Paul's third journey. He ministered at length in Ephesus, along with Aquila and Priscilla. City became leading center of Christian world.

58-60 - Paul defended himself before Felix, governor of Judea; then again before his successor Festus and King Herod Agrippa 11, while prisoner at Caesarea.

61-63 - Paul imprisoned at Rome; house arrest permitted some witnessing.

64 - Christians in Rome accused of setting great fire; persecuted by Nero. Martyrdom of Paul and Peter.

66 - Flight of Christians from Jerusalem to Pella at start of Jewish revolt.

67 - Josephus surrendered Jewish forces to Romans; he was protected and favored by Vespasian, who later became emperor.

70 - Jerusalem destroyed by Romans. Temple razed, except "Wailing Wall"; priesthood and Sanhedrin abolished; Jews scattered.

- Early Gospel accounts and epistles of Paul started to circulate in Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor.

75 - Early rise of sects, such as Docetists, Nicolaitans, Nazarenes and Ebionites.

93 - Emperor Domitian's persecution of Christians.

95 - Epistle of Clement, Roman presbyter, to Church of Corinth; a plea for unity and discipline.

**Table A: Churches, Messengers, and Key Events of Church History**

<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<b>2. Smyrna</b>	<b>Apostle John</b>
(Rev. 2:8-11)	(d. 100 AD)
<p>"Bitter."</p> <p>Highly praised without any reproof whatever: the believers suffered much tribulation, some were imprisoned, all were persecuted for "ten days" (ten years of especially bitter persecution under Emperor Diocletian). Though severely tried and tested, they provided some of the most illustrious examples of Christian faithfulness and endurance of any period of church history.</p> <p>They were also slandered by false brethren of "the synagogue of Satan" (those ensnared by the defiling spirit of the Adversary). Through it all, they were counseled not to fear but to "be faithful unto death" (holding fast the conviction of their faith in full submission to the will of God to the very end); and thereby they were ultimately to receive "the crown of life" (life on the highest plane, immortality, the highest reward held out in the universe).</p> <p>The overcomer was promised further that he would not be hurt of the second death (be punished by everlasting destruction from which there is no resurrection-the final disposition of the incorrigible and willfully disobedient).</p>	<p>One of the original twelve apostles who, with his brother James and Peter, composed the inner circle closest to Jesus. A fisherman with impulsive temperament, he was surnamed "Son of Thunder." His early rash and selfish behavior (he and his brother desired chief places in the Kingdom) gave way to gentleness and kindly love.</p> <p>John is depicted in the Gospels as greatly loved by Jesus and present on many significant occasions: the Transfiguration scene, at our Lord's Great Prophecy, at his side at the final Passover and in Gethsemane. Although he fled with others when Jesus was arrested, he regained courage to attend the trial and stood near Jesus at the cross. He and Peter were among the first at the empty tomb and are prominent in post-resurrection scenes. They later actively spread the faith despite strong opposition (Acts 4).</p> <p>John is referred to by Paul as a pillar of the early church (Gal. 2:9). He remained loyal and zealous in defense of truth and endured much suffering as the last apostle (Rev. 1:2,9). During his exile on Patmos, he received in vision the Book of Revelation. He also wrote four other books of the New Testament: his gospel, depicting the closeness of the Father and the Son (John chapters 1, 5, and 17) and the vital role of Jesus as the source of life (John 3:14-17; chap. 6); and his three letters emphasizing righteousness, love, and walking in the light (1 John 1:5-9; 4:7-12).</p> <p>John's life and writings were a source of great strength and encouragement to the believers during periods of intense pagan persecution.</p>

## ***Historical Events***

96 AD - Book of Revelation completed by John. 100 - Death of John, last of the twelve apostles.

1st century - Truth held in purity and simplicity; conflicts with Jewish beliefs and false teachers; faith spread zealously into Mediterranean world and Roman Empire; periodic persecutions by Roman emperors began.

67-110 - Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Wrote letters to churches detailing early beliefs and exhorting to faith. Emphasized role of bishop as district leader of church, worthy of respect and obedience. Martyred in arena at Rome by Emperor Trajan.

69-156 - Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, pupil of John. Resisted efforts of Roman bishop Anicetus to change observance of Eucharist from 14th day. Martyred at age 86.

100-167 - Justin Martyr. Brilliant orator, writer and defender of early Christianity against pagan philosophies. Emphasized moral teachings of Jesus. Slain at Rome.

180 - Celsus, powerful early opponent of Christianity. Criticized its pacifism and lack of support for Empire.

130-200 - Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons. Defended apostolic tradition. Countered inroads of Gnostics and Greeks. The first to systematize beliefs. Restrained Roman bishop Victor I from enforcing Easter date on Christians at Antioch, citing validity of ancient custom.

2nd century - Faith spread mostly among non-Jews in cities; doctrinal errors began to appear; Christians began to attract public notice as they deserted temples, rejected pagan festivals and demonstrated strict moral code; led to bitter persecution and ostracism.

160-220 - Tertullian. Converted lawyer became outstanding theologian and defender of faith. Rejected all philosophy as heresy. Looked for imminent Second Coming of Christ, refuted power of priests to forgive sins and preached fasting and prayer.

185-254 - Origen. Most learned man of early church. Quoted two-thirds of New Testament in vast writings. Defended pacifism. Died after torture.

250 - Emperor Decius' widespread persecutions. Attempted to restore religious customs of ancient Rome.

3rd century - Rapid growth of Christianity rivaled that of Empire but beliefs were corrupted; clergy gained titles and prestige; ceremonies took on pomp and splendor; sporadic persecutions continued.

303-313 - Emperor Diocletian's intense ten-year persecution of Christians.  
Final attempt to revive the old religion and strengthen the Empire.

### 3. Pergamos

(Rev. 2:12-17)

<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<p align="center"><b>2. Pergamos</b> (Rev. 2:12-17)</p>	<p align="center"><b>Arius</b> (c. 250-336 AD)</p>
<p>"Earthly elevation."</p> <p>Mingled praise and blame: the believers were zealous in their good works and held firmly to Jesus' name; they did not renounce their faith even in the face of mounting persecution. They opposed the rise of apostasy, for which they were commended under the symbol of "my faithful martyr Antipas" (meaning "against the fathers" or popes), even as the church grew in worldly prestige.</p> <p>But some succumbed to the doctrine of Balaam, enticing them to eat food sacrificed to idols (to accept pagan distortions of the truth in the creeds), to spiritual immorality (improper relation of church to state) and to the teachings of the Nicolaitanes (lordship in the church). For allowing these conditions to develop they were urged to repent, lest the Lord himself come unto them wielding the sword of his mouth (the sharp cutting edge of doctrinal truth) against the corrupters of the faith.</p> <p>The overcomer was promised he would eat of the hidden manna (be rewarded with immortality) and receive a white stone with a new name on it (a special token of the Lord's intimate favor).</p>	<p>Presbyter of Alexandria, Egypt, widely acclaimed for his scholarly, ascetic and morally exemplary life. He was educated in the renowned theological school of Antioch under the scholar Lucian. Opposed to lordship in the church, he humbly declined the offer of becoming bishop of Alexandria.</p> <p>Arius became chief spokesman for the early church view of the pre-eminence of the Heavenly Father above all other beings. He resisted the efforts of churchmen such as Alexander and Athanasius to equate Jesus with God. He believed the Bible taught that Jesus was to be highly esteemed above men and angels and worshipped as the son of God, but entirely separate from God the Father. He considered the Son to be the direct creation of God, not co-eternal, coequal or identical in substance: "There was a time when the Son was not; he was made, like all creatures, of a substance that had not previously existed."</p> <p>Arius attracted a large following through his teaching but managed to antagonize opposing clerics. His principal work, <i>Thalia</i> ("The Banquet"), set out his doctrine in prose and poetry. He also wrote verse and hymns that popularized his views among the common people.</p> <p>In 321 he was excommunicated by a synod convened by Alexander, the ruling patriarch. Yet his views were endorsed by many in the church, including Eusebius of Nicomedia, the most influential bishop of the East. As the dispute escalated to threaten the unity of the Empire, the Emperor Constantine convened the Council of Nicea in 325 to settle the matter.</p>

**Arius  
(continued)**

At the Council, the emperor himself took a leading role, although it is doubtful that he could have comprehended the theological points at issue. Essentially a politician, he concluded that the Alexandrian view was the most expedient. He therefore forced its adoption upon the Council and threatened loss of position to any who disagreed.

The Council decreed that Christ was "begotten, not made," and "of one essence with the Father." "Begotten" was understood to mean that Christ possessed the very nature and substance of the Father, and not that he had been created by God from nothing. Only Arius and two bishops refused to sign the Creed; all three were banished.

Undaunted, Arius composed a rival creed to that of Nicea which so impressed Constantine that he was recalled. But on the very day of his installation ceremony in Constantinople, Arius died suddenly under suspicious circumstances, leading his friends to suspect he had been poisoned.

The Arian controversy is considered to be the most fundamental dispute in the history of the church. It was not officially resolved until more than 50 years after Arius' death, when the Trinity view finally emerged as the orthodox position. But his teachings lingered, particularly in the Germanic tribes that later invaded the Empire. Subsequently, they continued to find expression in minority groups of the church and have survived to our day.

## ***Historical Events***

312 AD - Arius, presbyter of Alexandria, Egypt; defended early church view of Christ as created Son of God, not coequal or coeternal with the Father.

313 - Edict of Milan: decreed religious toleration for all; restored confiscated property to Christians.

321 - Constantine forbade work on the Sabbath day which he endorsed as being Sunday.

325 - Council of Nicea: convened by Constantine to resolve "Arian controversy." Under pressure from emperor, it concluded that Christ and God were equal. Arius was condemned and banished.

264-340 - Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea. Father of church history. Prolific writer. Catalogued New Testament books. Steered middle course at Nicea.

(?)-342 - Eusebius of Nicomedia. Strong supporter of Arius. Headed Arian party of 20 bishops at Nicea Council. Became Patriarch of Constantinople.

354 - Capital of Empire moved from Rome to Constantinople. Enhanced prestige of Roman bishop who became protector of people in place of emperor.

375 - Veneration of angels and dead saints introduced.

380 - Theodosius decreed Christianity compulsory and destroyed pagan temples. Magnificent churches built.

394 - The Mass as a daily celebration introduced.

4th century - Widespread doctrinal controversies. Adoption of Christianity as state religion opened floodgates of corruption.

340-420 - St. Jerome. Learned Catholic scholar. Author of Vulgate translation of Bible from original tongues into Latin; omitted Apocryphal books.

354-430 - St. Augustine, distinguished bishop of N. Africa. Single most influential theologian who molded doctrines of church. His "City of God" treatise encouraged rise of hierarchy under papal control.

431 - Council of Ephesus. Termed Mary "the Mother of God." Deposed Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople.

440-461 - Reign of Pope Leo (the Great). Founder of medieval papacy who forged it into a respected power. Regarded heresy as "crime against society" punishable by death.

445 - Emperor Valentinian III recognized the Roman Bishop as head of Western Church.

476 - Fall of Rome ended the Western Empire (first hom of Daniel 7:8).

# ***Historical Events***

5th century - Political events combined to enhance prestige of Bishop of Rome.

500 - Catholic priests began to wear distinctive garb.

533 - Emperor Justinian acknowledged the Roman bishop as head of all churches.

539 - Ostrogoths (third horn of Daniel 7:8) defeated at Ravenna. A hollow victory for the emperor since he could not effectively rule Italy from Constantinople. Left power vacuum for papacy to fill - the rise of "little horn" of Dan. 7:8. Start of 1260, 1290, and 1335 days of Daniel 12.

554 - Pope's temporal authority confirmed by Justinian.

590-604 - Reign of Gregory I (the Great). Considered first real pope, controlled all of western churches and consolidated power of papacy in Europe. Systematized its theology and perfected its liturgy; introduced doctrine of purgatory.

6th century - Events continued to favor rise of papal power in secular and religious areas.

732 - Battle of Tours, France. Moslems defeated decisively; Europe saved from Mohammedanism.

754 - Pepin, King of Franks, conquered Lombards. By giving their lands (much of Italy) to the pope, he elevated the pontiff to an earthly king with "Papal States," until 1870.

786 - Worship of images and the cross authorized.

800 - Charlemagne crowned "Roman Emperor" by Pope Leo III. His reign over Roman and Frank realms blessed in return for his recognition of "Papal States." The emperor's strong rule and mutual ties raised papacy to world power and began "papal millennium."

858 - Boastful reign of Pope Nicholas 1. Claimed rulership over civil governments as well as the church.

870-1050 - "Midnight of Dark Ages." Bribery, corruption, immorality and bloodshed made it darkest period of papal degradation.

1000 - The millennium from supposed birth date of Christ. Raised fear of judgment and end of world throughout Christian lands.

1054 - Split of Eastern and Western Churches over issue of headship. Patriarch of Constantinople refuted claims of pope in Rome.

1073 - Reign of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand). Viewed pope as absolute sovereign of world with all classes subject to him. Attempted reform of clergy, especially regarding immorality and simony (purchasing of office). Decreed celibacy of priesthood.

1090 - Rosary (praying with beads) introduced.



<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<b>4. Thyatira</b>	<b>Peter Waldo</b>
(Rev. 2:18-29)	(d. 1217)
<p>"Sweet perfume of sacrifice."</p> <p>Mingled praise and blame: the believers were loving, faithful, active and patient in their service. They were especially commended for their patient endurance in their abundant works, "the last more than the first" (a seeming reference to their loyalty and endurance under the severe stresses of the reign of the apostate church). They were further encouraged to "hold fast to what you have until I come."</p> <p>But some tolerated Jezebel and her false and immoral teachings, likened to "the depths of Satan" (the false church at the height of its power and corruption). Especially condemned were encouraging fornication (worldly affiliations) and "eating food sacrificed to idols" (inculcating pagan concepts introduced into the church). They were warned that Jezebel (the corrupt mother church), her lovers (kingdoms of this world) and her children (offshoot churches) all would be condemned unless repentant.</p> <p>The overcomer was promised power to rule over the nations "with a rod of iron" and to receive "the morning star" (be intimately associated with Christ in glory).</p>	<p>Rich merchant of Lyons, France, who devoted his life to advancing true piety and Christian knowledge. In 1160 he had portions of the Bible translated into the common tongue, then zealously began to preach the newfound truths. In 1173 he began methodically distributing his wealth to the poor.</p> <p>Noting discrepancies with the Roman church and excesses of its clergy, he openly criticized them at the peril of his life. He rejected all nonbiblical elements of worship, such as purgatory, adoration of saints, images, indulgences and prayers for the dead. He opposed the entire sacerdotal system on the grounds that priestly functions were not derived from ordination but from individual faithfulness.</p> <p>Waldo advocated a simple life-style, unencumbered with church organization or hierarchy. In 1179 he formed a lay order of evangelists composed of propertyless and celibate men, known as "The Poor Men of Lyons." These traveled in pairs and preached openly from the Scriptures. They were opposed by the local archbishop, censured by the Third Lateran Council (1179), and condemned by Pope Innocent III and the Verona Council (1184).</p> <p>The Waldensians fled into Italy and the AJps and eventually spread their faith throughout Europe, determined "to obey God rather than men." They were the first to make widely effective use of the vernacular Bible in preaching, shining out as a beacon on a mountain top during a very dark age. Despite intense persecution, some of Waldo's followers survived to the time of the Reformation.</p>

## ***Historical Events***

1096-1291 AD - Crusades. Forceful efforts to free Holy Land from ruthless Islamic rule. All classes of society conscripted by Pope Urban 11 to join movement. Successful at first, but could not permanently stem tide of Mohammedanism that swept over Asia Minor.

1122 - Concordat of Worms. Worked out compromise of power between papacy and civil rulers.

1157 - Early beginning of Waidensian movement (France). Called for return to simple life of the Gospels. Criticized church pomp and wealth and all non-biblical practices; later opposed entire priestly system.

1160 - Waldo produced first translation of Bible in modern language (French).

1163 - Council of Tours. Decreed that heretics were to be tracked down, imprisoned and their property confiscated.

1179 - Third Lateran Council. Pronounced Anathema against Albigensian heretics; censured Waldo for sending out lay preachers.

1184 - Council of Verona. Decreed that both heretics and those protecting them were to be condemned, exiled and their property confiscated.

1198-1216 - Reign of Innocent III, most powerful of all popes. Claimed title 'Vicar of Christ' and right to depose kings. Outranked all civil rulers of his day. Defended church dogmas and forbade reading of Bible in common tongue. Father of Inquisition-church court for detection and punishment of heretics. Ordered mass extermination of Albigenses.

1229 - Council of Toulouse. Commissioned papal Inquisition. Sanctioned terrorism against Protestants and required Catholics to vigorously persecute heretics. Gave authority to destroy meeting places, accept anonymous accusations, use torture to secure confessions, confiscate goods and slay with sword or fire. Banned possession of Bible by laymen.

1231 - Pope Gregory IX decreed that heretics were to be handed over to the secular power for "the punishment they deserved"-death at the stake; repentant heretics to be imprisoned for life.

1305 - Pope Clement V gave Inquisition powers to King Philip IV of France, which he used to inflict torture and destruction on the Knights Templar.

- Dante, shocked by what he found in a visit to Rome, termed the Vatican  
- 'sewer of corruption' and assigned popes of his day to lowest parts of hell.

<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<p data-bbox="337 233 485 264"><b>5. Sardis</b></p> <p data-bbox="321 270 501 302">(Rev. 3:1-6)</p>	<p data-bbox="1019 233 1248 264"><b>John Wycliffe</b></p> <p data-bbox="1036 270 1232 302">(1320-1384)</p>
<p data-bbox="94 306 597 338">"Remnant; that which remains."</p> <p data-bbox="94 384 729 604">Strongly condemned: only a few believers were worthy and deserving, with undefiled garments. The majority had fallen asleep spiritually, or died; into their works were not found fulfilled before God.</p> <p data-bbox="94 646 729 940">They were urged to arouse themselves, to be watchful, repentant and to strengthen "the things which remain, that are ready to die;" otherwise the Lord would come upon them "as a thief" (by surprise). They were counseled to recall what they had learned, receive the lessons into obedient hearts, and to "hold fast."</p> <p data-bbox="94 982 729 1318">The overcomer was promised to be clothed in white raiment (symbol of purity and righteousness) and to walk with Jesus (as an intimate companion). His name would be confessed (commended) before the Father and the angels, and not be blotted out of the book of life (the record of the elect whose names are written in heaven).</p>	<p data-bbox="751 306 1513 604">Brilliant English scholar, Oxford professor and statesman . In 1366 his early concerns with the practical abuses of papacy, such as its unjust taxation policies and interference in secular affairs, brought him into public view. Later, in discovering the Bible to be the sole guide for Christian faith, he was brought open conflict with papacy along a broad front.</p> <p data-bbox="751 646 1513 1654">By 1378 he evolved a system of doctrine that undermined the whole structure of the church. In pamphlets and lectures he attacked historical papal claims in both religious and secular spheres. He opposed church hierarchy, the system of priesthood, indulgences, confession, penance, veneration of images and transubstantiation. His teachings raised the wrath of the clergy but found popular support across all classes. He became one of the greatest and boldest of the reformers, highly admired at home and abroad. Wycliffe was exemplary in his purity of life, his zeal for biblical truth and his courage in defending it. His continual reference to the Scriptures earned him the honorary title of, the evangelical doctor." His translation of the complete Bible into English is of special note, as it was the only such version available for 150 years. As an early herald of Reformation, he was widely recognized for his impact on medieval society, but too far ahead of his time to break the power of Rome. His followers (Lollards) were cruelly and methodically persecuted almost to extinction, but miraculously he escaped a martyr's death. Later (in 1428) his bones were exhumed and burned by decree of the Council of Constance.</p>

## ***Historical Events***

1366 AD - Wycliffe publicly acclaimed for condemning abuses of papacy and its interference in secular affairs of state.

1377 - Wycliffe charged with heresy by Pope Gregory XI after years of relentless attacks upon the entire Roman system by tracts and lectures at

Oxford. He was later admiringly called "the morning star of the Reformation. "

1378 - Start of "Great Schism" that divided Catholic Church for 39 years. Two rival popes, Urban VI and Clement VII, were elected and each claimed supreme authority.

1388 - Wycliffe's translation of Bible finished by John Purcey; first complete Bible in English.

1401 - England passed its first law against heresy, principally against Lollardy.

1408 - John Huss (Bohemia). Openly preached against indulgences and priestly abuses. Denounced by church, stripped of authority to preach, but defended by populace.

1409 - Pope Alexander V ordered destruction of all Wycliffe's writings. Archbishop of Bohemia publicly burned 200 of them.

1415 - Council of Constance. Condemned Wycliffe (more than 30 years after his death). Consigned John Huss to be burned at the stake.

1450 - Pope Nicholas V authorized the Portuguese to "attack, subject, and reduce to perpetual slavery the Saracens, pagans, and other enemies of Christ. "

1453 - Fall of Constantinople to Turks. Ended Eastern Roman Empire and left Roman pope without any serious rival. Europe's second threat of Moslem control not settled until the Battle of Vienna in 1683.

1456 - The Bible published at Mainz by John Gutenberg. One of earliest books printed in Europe.

1476 - Pope Sixtus IV gave Inquisition powers to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Tomas de Torquemada, a Dominican monk, carried on the work with zeal and cruelty; named Grand Inquisitor by Pope Innocent VIII in 1487.

1491 - Savonarola, friar and statesman of Florence, criticized corruption of clergy. In 1497 he attacked crimes of Pope Alexander VI and spurned offer of cardinal's hat. In 1498 he was burned at the stake.

<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<p data-bbox="285 233 537 264"><b>6. Philadelphia</b></p> <p data-bbox="310 270 513 302">(Rev. 3:7-13)</p>	<p data-bbox="1013 233 1252 264"><b>Martin Luther</b></p> <p data-bbox="1037 270 1227 302">(1483-1546)</p>
<p data-bbox="94 306 347 338">"Brotherly love."</p> <p data-bbox="94 386 729 863">Highly praised without any reproof whatever: the believers were faithful to Jesus' name and loyal to the truth message, despite having but "little strength" or power compared to the forces of spiritual darkness all around them. "An open door" (the beginning of a new era, with expanded opportunities for proclaiming the truth) was set before them by their Lord, which none other could close (neither the power of Satan, nor the apostate church, nor any other force).</p> <p data-bbox="94 911 729 1388">The Lord's followers were to be kept safe from the hour of testing (probably the special trials in the time of trouble at the close or harvest of the Gospel Age) coming upon the entire world (beginning with the church) because "they kept the word of my patience" (they were persistently faithful through their own severe trials of faith). They were urged to hold fast to the truth and thereby retain their crown of life; for they were assured that their Lord would "come quickly" to receive them unto himself.</p> <p data-bbox="94 1436 729 1839">The overcomer was promised eventually to be worshipped by the false brethren "of the synagogue of Satan" (those ensnared by the defiling of the Adversary) and to be made "a pillar in the Temple of God" (a vital and prominent part of the true temple - the church of Christ). The names of God and of the New Jerusalem were to be written on him, as well as a new name given by Jesus.</p>	<p data-bbox="751 306 1513 978">Promising young German scholar who providentially turned from pursuing a lucrative legal career to take on the austere life of a monk, a decision destined to alter the course of world history. As a student and later a priest and doctor of theology, he became enraptured with the Bible but startled by what he found: the source of divine authority was the Bible itself, not the church; and salvation was attained by faith in God through Christ (Rom. 5:1; 1:17), not by rituals, sacraments, or penances. In 1508 he became a respected teacher at the University of Wittenberg and began preaching sermons that attracted wide attention. Based upon encouraging themes of God's love and the assurance of salvation by faith, they contrasted sharply with the speculative philosophies and infidelity of the schoolmen.</p> <p data-bbox="751 1026 1513 1503">Luther was gifted with mental genius, reasoning ability, energy, dedication and an eloquent manner, all of which stood him well in his growing role of reformer. Tetzels sale of indulgences in Germany, offering pardon for sins, prompted Luther's break with Rome in 1517 and the issuance of his 95 theses against papal authority. These created a sensation throughout the land and shook the very foundation of the church. In 1520 he continued his defiant stance by publicly burning the pope's bull excommunicating him. This was followed in 1520-21 by three great tracts clarifying his main beliefs.</p> <p data-bbox="751 1551 1513 1871">His <i>Open Letter ... Concerning the ... State</i> held that secular power was ordained of God and included overseeing the church and enforcing reform of its abuses; it thus struck a bold blow against the papal concept of ruling both church and state. In <i>The Babylonian Captivity of the Church</i>, he attacked the spirit whole sacramental system, especially the Mass, and asserted that there were but two valid ordinances, Baptism and</p>

the Lord's Supper. He saw no biblical basis for popes or priests and believed that all members of the body of Christ were equal before God. He symbolized this "priesthood of believers" concept by introducing congregational hymn singing and conducting services in German instead of Latin.

In 1521 he was asked to defend his beliefs before the Diet of Worms, a prestigious gathering of princes and clerics called by Charles V, emperor of Germany. Luther's presence there excited widespread interest: papal forces called for his censure but popular sentiment demanded a fair hearing. When the Diet called upon Luther to recant, with dignity he replied, "I cannot retract any teaching except it be disproved by Scripture or by reason." His ensuing banishment by the pro-Catholic emperor forced him into brief retirement at Wartburg Castle under the protectorship of Frederick, the elector of Saxony. There, assisted by his friend Melanchthon, he translated the New Testament into German, later published in 1534.

Luther clearly was the moving force of the Reformation, whose daring life forever shattered the medieval church and emphasized the rightful place of the Bible. He stands foremost among those called to lead God's people out of the darkness of the middle ages into the light of a purer faith and a clearer understanding of truth.

# ***Historical Events***

1514 AD - Lateran Council began reform of church abuses; announced triumph over all heresies.

1517 - Luther posted 95 theses at Wittenberg: "the spark that set Europe aflame." Followed by powerful sermons and writings that boldly attacked papacy and led to founding of widespread protest movements.

1521 - Diet of Worms condemned Luther as a heretic. Pope Leo X gave title "Defender of the Faith" to England's Henry VIII for refuting Luther.

1534 - King Henry VIII separated from Church of Rome for its refusal to annul his first marriage.

1536 - Anabaptists tortured and slain in Miinster.

- William Tyndale, English Bible translator, condemned by papacy and strangled at the stake.

1537 - Menno Simons, Mennonite leader. Forbade taking of oaths or killing. Rejected non-biblical terms.

1541 - John Calvin, banished from Paris, made Geneva focal point of Protestantism in Europe.

1545-1563 - Council of Trent met to reform church under Jesuit guidance. Adopted revised creed and launched Catholic "counter reformation." Placed tradition of churchmen equal in authority to that of the Bible and officially added Apocryphal books.

1555 - Peace of Augsburg. Compromise allowed princes to decide religion of their territories.

1556 - Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, burned at stake for renouncing Church of Rome.

1559 - Pope Pius IV urged extermination of Huguenots in France (about 400,000 Protestants who had accepted Luther's teachings).

1563 - Anglican Church adopted "Thirty-Nine Articles." A mix of Protestant dogma and Catholic liturgy.

1572 - French Catholics massacred 70,000 Huguenots in Paris on St. Bartholomew's Day (Aug. 23). Led Pope Gregory XIII to celebrate Mass of thanksgiving, proclaim a Jubilee, and memorialize the event with a new medal and paintings near Sistine Chapel.

1598 - Edict of Nantes. Granted freedom of worship to Huguenots in France after 40 years of relentless persecution. (Edict was revoked in 1685, prompting 500,000 Huguenots to flee to Protestant lands.)

16th century - Widespread Reformation movement crystallized lengthy effort to restore Bible truths. Led to founding of Protestant churches and first major setback for papacy. Leaders were Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and Knox. Ended Middle Ages and changed complexion of Europe.

# ***Historical Events***

1611 - King James Bible published (London). Work of 47 scholars stood virtually alone for over 300 years as only Protestant Bible in English-speaking lands. Single most influential book in history of the world.

1641 - Irish Catholics massacred 30,000 Protestants.

1648 - Peace of Westphalia: ended 30 Years' War and fixed boundaries of Catholic and Protestant states.

1703-1791 - John Wesley. Preached to masses in fields and streets. Raised moral tone of England.

1775 - Rising tide of public opinion against papacy. Influenced by Nationalism and Enlightenment in France and England.

1789-1799 - French Revolution. Opened era menacing to religion but especially undermined papacy. Napoleon Bonaparte's humiliations of Pope Pius VI hastened the pope's death as prisoner in France (1799). Marked low point and second major setback for papacy (ending of 3-1/2 times of Daniel 12:6,7).

1806 - Napoleon forced an end to the "Holy Roman Empire" that had existed since 800 A.D.

1799-1829 - Religious awakening in Europe and America. Spurred renewed interest in Bible and revealed need for cleansing errors of past. New groups founded; Bible societies began distributing Bibles widely and cheaply in common languages.

1829-1844 - "Millerite Movement" (Eastern U.S.). Aroused widespread interest in Bible prophecies of end times. Thorough in its reforms, it prepared sincere believers for further blessings. (Movement began at the ending of 1290 days of Daniel 12:10,11.)

1846 - Evangelical Alliance (London). Forerunner of ecumenical movement. Consolidated beliefs of evangelical churches and stressed orthodox doctrines. Caused non-conforming groups ("sects") to fall into disrepute. (End of 2300 days of Daniel 8:13,14, when "sanctuary" class was "cleansed.")

1854 - Doctrine of Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary proclaimed by Pope Pius IX.

1859 - Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* popularized theory of evolution.  
- Revolutionized thinking worldwide and greatly weakened influence of religion.

1870 - King Victor Emanuel of Italy stripped papacy of all remaining temporal power in Rome and "papal states." Marked third major setback for papacy.

- Doctrine of Papal Infallibility in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by Vatican Council.



<b>Church Name &amp; Characteristics</b>	<b>Messenger</b>
<p data-bbox="337 233 529 264" style="text-align: center;"><b>5. Laodicea</b></p> <p data-bbox="321 270 500 302" style="text-align: center;">(Rev. 3:1-6)</p>	<p data-bbox="1062 233 1341 264" style="text-align: center;"><b>Charles T. Russell</b></p> <p data-bbox="1036 270 1227 302" style="text-align: center;">(1320-1384)</p>
<p data-bbox="94 312 289 344"><b>7. Laodicea</b></p> <p data-bbox="94 386 315 417">(Rev. 3:14-22)</p> <p data-bbox="94 464 727 533">"Justice for the people" and "Judged people."</p> <p data-bbox="94 575 727 680">Strongly condemned: the believers were lukewarm in their deeds ("neither cold nor hot"), self-satisfied and deluded.</p> <p data-bbox="94 722 727 1131">They considered themselves rich and prosperous by worldly standards, though actually spiritually "wretched, poor, naked and blind" (in a state of confusion, lacking the true riches of divine grace and truth, unmindful of God's plan of blessing or its stage of development, and immersed in worldly pursuits). Therefore, they were to be "spued Out Of (Jesus') mouth" (cast out of divine favor as the Lord's spokesman).</p> <p data-bbox="94 1173 727 1871">They were urged to respond to Jesus' reproofs, repent of their sins and regain their spiritual integrity and zeal. They were counseled "to buy of [him] gold tried in the fire" (to obtain true heavenly riches and the divine nature at the cost of self-sacrifice, trial, and suffering for Christ); to obtain "white raiment for clothing" (the robe of Christ's righteousness)-, and to "anoint (their) eyes with eyesalve" (use present truth to appreciate the unfolding of God's plan of blessing and the significance of end-time events). And finally they were invited to open to the knock and voice of Jesus as (to recognize their returned Lord by the fulfillment of Bible time prophecies) and to sup with him (be privileged to partake of his fellowship in rich Spiritual feasting).</p>	<p data-bbox="751 312 1053 344"><b>Charles T. Russell</b></p> <p data-bbox="751 386 943 417">(1852-1916)</p> <p data-bbox="751 464 1513 831">Successful young Christian businessman who was troubled with the failure of church creeds to depict the noble character of God. Only by examining the Bible directly was he able to discover an all-wise, powerful, loving and just Creator, worthy of devotion and worship. When he perceived God's comprehensive plan of salvation to bless the human race (Eph. 1:9,10; Psa. 72), he devoted his life to the full-time ministry.</p> <p data-bbox="751 873 1513 1545">In 1876 he was elected Pastor of an Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Bible class and began a period of intense study and formulation of beliefs. He preferred the topical method and by rightly dividing the Bible according to symbols, parables, types and time periods was able to strike complete harmony in its teachings. In 1879 he began publishing a monthly religious journal, <i>Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence</i>, which for almost 40 years became one of the mainstays of the Bible Student Movement which he launched. In 1886 came the first of a series of <i>Studies in the Scriptures</i> entitled <i>The Divine Plan of the Ages</i>, which reached the phenomenal circulation of six million. His voluminous writings were characterized by an easy flowing style that contrasted sharply with the complex theological treatises of his day and were well received.</p> <p data-bbox="751 1587 1513 1871">Pastor Russell became widely known by his weekly sermons published in 2,000 city newspapers across the country. Hundreds of autonomous Bible study groups elected him as their pastor; they appreciated his doctrine, his exemplary manner of life and his warm, kind personality. He gave great emphasis to faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ as fundamental to</p>

The overcomer was promised to be seated with Jesus in his throne (symbol of rulership in the Messianic Kingdom), even as Jesus was privileged to sit in his Father's throne (symbol of universal dominion, glory And power).

all hope of future life. He also taught that full conversion of the world awaited the development of the elect class joint heirs with Christ; that together, Christ and his church would administer a future earthly Kingdom to bring the opportunity for salvation to the remainder of mankind, including all who have died.

Pastor Russell traveled constantly as public lecturer and as preacher to many of the congregations that had elected him as their beloved pastor. In 1914 he climaxed his 40 year ministry by producing *The Photo Drama of Creation*, a unique state-of-the-art audio visual production depicting God's dealings with mankind-past, present and future. It was successfully shown to over ten million viewers in major cities at home and abroad.

Despite his appeal to the general populace, his work was vigorously opposed by most church ministers. They frowned at his lack of denominational training and de-emphasis of church organization. They continued to defend the orthodox doctrines of hell-fire, Trinity and the inherent immortality of the soul which he denounced as pagan concepts that lacked biblical authority.

Pastor Russell's prodigious writings continue to be valued for their lucid explanation of the Bible and revealing of the plan of God for man's uplift. He brought an awareness of end times and of an expectation of grand prophetic fulfillments, including the imminent establishment of God's long-promised Kingdom on earth.

## ***Historical Events***

1874 AD - Beginning of our Lord's Parousia (invisible presence). Marked by "blessedness" at end of "1335 days" of Daniel 12:12-an outpouring of spiritual truths not seen since the days of the early church. Opened modern era benefiting from industrial progress, knowledge explosion, rapid travel and increased wealth, but also led to global unrest, wars and conflicts. (Daniel 12:1,4)

1876 - "Bible Student Movement" founded by Pastor C. T. Russell in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Rapidly expanded to local congregations across U.S. and convention gatherings in large cities. Discarded errors of Dark Ages and stressed importance of Christ's ransom sacrifice, the high calling of Gospel Age, Christ's invisible presence in harvest of age and God's plan to culminate in restitution blessings for all mankind.

Late 19th century - "Higher Criticism." A movement of scholars mainly from Germany that analyzed Bible from literary and historical aspects. Despite claims of constructively identifying sources and methods of Bible authors, it seriously undermined authority and inspiration of Scriptures.

Early 20th century - Struggle between "Modernism" and "Fundamentalism": a radical weakening of traditional beliefs vs. a reaffirmation of orthodoxy. One repudiated miracles, the fall of man, need of atonement and the resurrection; the other sought to define basics of the faith and expose evolution, higher criticism and "cults." Invoked bitter controversy, with liberal views prevailing until recent times.

1914 - Outbreak of World War 1. Shattered hopes of building a modern society without war. Witnessed end of theory of 'divine right of kings' with collapse of old ruling houses of Europe. (End of "Times of Gentiles" prophecy, Luke 21:24.)

1925 - "Monkey" trial of John Scopes, biology teacher, at Dayton, Tennessee. Widely publicized test case to determine legality of state laws forbidding teaching evolution in public schools. Both the prosecutor William J. Bryan (a noted statesman) and the defender Clarence Darrow (a famous lawyer) volunteered their services. Scopes was fined but belief in creation was so ridiculed that the state laws became outmoded.

1929 - Lateran Treaty: Italy recognized international sovereignty of Holy See, with pope as temporal head of Vatican State (108 acres). Papacy reimbursed for earlier loss of "Papal States." Led to establishing of diplomatic relations between Vatican and all major governments except U.S. and Russia.

1929-1930's - Pope Pius XI worked out 18 concordats (agreements) with European

powers to ensure Roman church's spiritual authority over Catholics in their respective lands and freedom from secular control.

1939 - Outbreak of World War II. Caused global disruptions that contributed greatly to moral breakdown of society and weakening of religious restraints.

1948 - Birth of World Council of Churches (Amsterdam). Ensuing conferences held in Evanston (1954), New Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968), Nairobi (1975) and Vancouver (1983). A fellowship of over 250 churches-Protestant, Anglican and Greek Orthodox -from over 90 countries, organized to discuss urgent problems of practical Christianity. Gave tremendous impetus to ecumenical movement.

Mid 20th century - Papacy regained level of world prestige not seen since Middle Ages. Enhanced by diplomatic ties, attention-gathering encyclicals and media coverage of Vatican events.

1962-1965 - Second Vatican Council (Rome). Colorful, highly publicized gathering of Catholic bishops from around the world, initiated by Pope John XXIII. Updated church government, practices and liturgy. Dramatically altered previous opposition to ecumenism and laid groundwork for dialogue with Protestant groups-now called "separated brethren."

1963 - Pope John XXIII issued encyclical, Peace on Earth. Termed by President of U.N. General Assembly as "a guiding beacon in a world anxiously searching for concord and understanding."

1965 - Pope Paul VI's enthusiastic reception at U.N. in New York. "No more war; war never again!" climaxed his appeal to General Assembly. Greatly enhanced his image as Christianity's leading spokesman on international affairs.

1968 - Pope Paul VI's encyclical banning artificial birth control. Stirred worldwide turmoil within Catholicism and opened dissent in other areas, including papal infallibility and celibacy of priests. Pope Paul unable to heal rift during his pontificate.

1970 - Surge of Fundamentalism. Churches stressing Bible teachings and traditional values began gaining members while mainline modernist bodies suffered losses. Efforts made to introduce Creationism into public school texts. By 1980, movement gained political strength and boosted Reagan presidency.

1970 - Growth of "electronic churches." Start of era of mass marketing of religion by handful of television preachers who were catapulted to power and prominence. Leaders included Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson, Robert Schuller, Jimmy Swaggart and Oral Roberts. By 1985, a dozen televangelism ministries approached \$100 million each in annual operating budgets.

1979 - Pope John Paul II began a series of worldwide good-will visits that would make him the most traveled pontiff in history. In Istanbul (former

Constantinople), Turkey, he proposed reunion with Dimitrios 1, the ruling patriarch of 150 million Eastern Orthodox believers, attempting to heal Christianity's oldest major schism (since 1054). 1982 - World Council of Churches' doctrinal proposal. A compromise on Baptism, Eucharist and the ministry that culminated decades of effort to harmonize irreconcilable views. If approved, promises to be greatest advance in unity since before Reformation.

- Pope John Paul 11's historic trip to England. He proposed reunification of the Anglican Church (65 million) with Roman Catholic (764 million), under headship of pope. Churches separated since 1534.

1984 - U.S. established formal diplomatic relations with the Vatican despite protests from fundamentalists.

1985 - "Jesus Seminar" founded in U.S. A group of over 100 liberal professors from major seminaries and religious colleges. Use "higher critical" methods to dispute authenticity of Jesus' sayings in Gospels.

1987 - Widespread scandals among top T.V. evangelists. Disclosures of immorality and misuse of vast contributions weakened popular support. Both religious and political arms of fundamentalist movement severely shaken.

- Pope John Paul 11's extensive tour of U.S. Favorable media coverage boosted his popular appeal. He appeared as a credible, likeable leader, promoting social justice and traditional church dogma.

**Section Two -  
Placement of the Seven  
Churches and Messengers  
on the Stream of History**

## **Background and Explanation of Table B**

### **(a) EUROPEAN BIBLE F-XPOSITORS.**

At the close of the 18th century, there was a rising tide of interest in Bible prophecy on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly in Great Britain and in America. A British study published anonymously at the height of the French Revolution summarized various views held by eight well-known European Bible scholars, including John Gill, Thomas Newton, Pierre Jurieu, and Robert Fleming, Jr. It appeared under the title, *Prophetic Conjectures on the French Revolution*, but in content was much more extensive and covered the whole of Revelation as well as portions of Daniel. It was reprinted at Philadelphia in 1794 and was immediately sold out, attesting to the deep and growing interest of Americans in prophetic matters. It contained the historical scope of the seven churches as summarized in the table. (See L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. IV, pp. 108-113.)

### **(b) VITRINGA.**

Vitringa is one of the expositors of "a former age" mentioned by E. B. Elliott; we can only guess at his era, probably the previous, or 18th century. Elliott provides diagrams of the views of both Vitringa and a contemporary commentator, Mr. Trotter. (See E. B. Elliott, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.) Vitringa offers a surprisingly detailed chronological overview, with divisions that appear well laid out. The chief drawback to his layout seems to arise in the very first era, which he shows as extending to 250 A.D. Few students of church history would agree that the desirable condition of purity in doctrine and practice extended for more than just a few short years during the primitive or early church.

### **(c) TROTTER.**

Trotter is identified by Elliott as a member of the Church of the Brethren at York, England, who published his views on chronology and the "prefigurative" character of the messages to the Seven Churches in a work entitled, *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects* in 1854. (See E. B. Elliott, *loc. cit.*) Trotter's outline seems unusual in that it appears quite tenable in the early stages of the church but its descriptions for Sardis and Philadelphia seem noticeably lacking. Since the Reformation period is wholly omitted and Philadelphia is described as a "feeble remnant," one almost wonders if an error might not have been made in transcribing from the original source.

**Table B: Views of Bible Expositors of the Past**

SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION	Historical Placement by						
	(a) COMPOSITE OF EUROPEAN EXPOSITORS (1793)	(b) VITRINGA (circa 18 <sup>th</sup> century)	(c) TROTTER Papers On Prophetic Subjects (1854)	(d) COMPOSITE OF SABBATARIAN ADVENTISTS (1844-1875)	(e) W. 1. MANN "The Seven Churches" (1883)	(f) C. J. WOODWORTH The Finished Mystery (1917)	(g) R. E. STREETER <i>The Revelation of Jesus Christ</i> (1923)
<b>1. EPHESUS</b> "First, desirable."	Church in apostolic age.	St. John to 250 A.D	Apostolic Age to death of St. John	34 A.D. to death of apostles.	Lives of the apostles.	33-73 A.D. Apostle Paul.	To 100 A.D. (Messengers a class, not individuals).
<b>2. SMYRNA</b> "Bitter affliction."	Early persecutions to Constantine.	250-311.	Death of John to Constantine.	Death of apostles to cir. 325 A.D.	Pagan persecution to cir. 325 A.D.	73-325. Apostle John.	100-313. (laps part of Pergamos period).
<b>3. PERGAMOS</b> "Earthly elevation."	Rise of popery.	311-700.	Constantine to rise of Popery about 7th cent.	538 to cir. 1600.	Rise of papacy.	325-1160. Arius.	303-539.
<b>4. THYATIRA</b> "Sweet perfume of sacrifice."	Dark acres of church.	700-1200.	Popery of Dark Ages to 1500.	Cir. 325 to 538.	Papacy exalted true church in wilderness.	1160-1378. Peter Waldo.	539 to 16th cent. (laps Sardis period).
<b>5. SARDIS</b> "Remnant."	The reformed church.	1200-1500.	Protestantism after the Reformation.	Cir. 1600 to 1755.	Short Interval prior to Reformation.	1378-1517 John Wycliffe.	15th to 16 <sup>th</sup> centuries.
<b>6. PHILADELPHIA</b> "Brotherly love."	Christ's spiritual reign	Early Reformation.	Feeble Faithful remnant.	1755-1844.	Reformation to recent times	1517-1874. Martin Luther.	16th to late 19th centuries.



#### **(d) SABBATARIAN ADVENTISTS.**

Among the leading spokesmen of the Sabbatarian Adventists in the formative period 1844-1875, immediately following the Millerite Movement, were James White, Joseph Bates, John N. Andrews, Hiram Edson, and Uriah Smith. They gave particular emphasis to the study of the Book of Revelation, with its portrayals of the seven churches, seals, trumpets, witnesses, beasts, messengers, vials, and other symbols, refining details of interpretation that basically had already been laid out by earlier students of the prophecies through the centuries. Their chronological outline understandably pinpoints 1844, the year of the great Adventist disappointment. (See Froom, *op. cit.*, pp. 1049-1050, 1118-1119, 1122-1123, 1128-1129, and 1144.)

#### **(e) W. I. MANN.**

W. I. Mann of Allegheny, Pa., was an associate of Pastor C. T. Russell in the early days of the Bible Student Movement and a regular contributor to its monthly publication, the "Watch Tower." In the years 1882-1883, a series of his articles on "The Seven Churches" was published, outlining the historical character of the messages and sketching the main events of each period. (See Tower Reprints, pp. 336, 351, 359-360, 388-390, 490-492, and 504-506.) These are summarized in the table.

Mann observed that the Book of Revelation contains a series of 69 pictures of events and of periods in earth's history - from Christ's first advent onward," usually grouped in seven succeeding stages. Several of the series (seals, trumpets, etc.) run more or less synchronous with each other and to be in harmony with these he suggests the seven messages to the churches must likewise "be directed to seven succeeding periods in the history of the church." He believed the "remarkable harmony" between those prophecies and their fulfillments in history leaves no doubt as to the correctness of such an application; and further, that it serves both as an "unanswerable proof of the inspiration of the book" itself and as a "pledge to our faith in what remains unfulfilled. "

Since Mann is the earliest of the Bible Student expositors on this subject, it will be of interest to scan his interpretations of the various messages and pick out some highlights. He sees Ephesus as that early period when the believers "forsook all and followed [Christ]"; took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; and faithfully labored and discerned true teachers from the false. Smyrna is viewed as the period of most bitter persecution under the Roman emperors. It was then that "some of the most sublime pictures of Christian endurance that the world has ever seen were enacted."

In the Pergamos period, he details what occurred when Constantine professedly

embraced Christianity: It suddenly became fashionable to be a Christian, and the church was elevated to a position of prominence. Pagan philosophers, joining the trend, found ways to blend the old customs with the new. Sacred places, days and persons, as well as ceremonies long familiar to the people, were simply Christianized and adopted with great pomp. Dead apostles and saints were canonized, angels were venerated, Mariology arose, and God was worshipped in a three-fold form, all to compete with the long line of pagan deities and to make conversions more attractive. Thus instead of the old usages being abolished, they were merely amalgamated into the new, and a pseudo-Christianity was born.

Thyatira is seen as the reign of the false church and the period of papal persecution, when the true church was driven into the wilderness condition.

The descriptions of Jezebel are seen to fit exactly the teachings of Rome. As the nourisher and protector of the prophets of Baal, she is a type of the papal church, the mother of abominations. Ahab, her husband and king of Israel, represents the kings of Europe who committed spiritual fornication with the "mother church." Sardis is described only in general terms without a specific historical application: It was a remnant church in which only a few were found deserving. Their love and understanding of the Scriptures had evidently decreased greatly and they merited the reproof to "hold fast and repent." A lessening of persecutions had caused a loss of zeal; and the newfound ease had brought on a state of languor.

Philadelphia is the period of the Reformation, the beginning of a new era and a mighty work: "A dawning of light where all had been darkness; the separation of the true from the false and a new start in the way of truth and life." God's overruling had opened the door and though the reformers had but "a little strength" compared with the mighty hosts of their enemies (the apostate church), none would be able to shut that door. Luther's fearless stance at the Diet of Worms was "worthy of a Paul" and well depicted those who the Master said had "kept [his] word and not denied [his] name."

Laodicea ("tried or judged people") is taken as a picture of the present nominal church which was tried and found wanting at our Lord's return. Being neither hot nor cold she "incite[s] disgust and [is] cast out as a hateful thing from being the mouthpiece of the Lord." Spiritually impoverished, naked, and blind, she deceives herself into thinking that she is rich and in need of nothing. Unknown to this church, our Lord has returned: To Sardis the message was, "I will come"; to Philadelphia, 'I come quickly'; to Laodicea, it is 'rap, rap, rap, Awake; let me come in.'" This explains why the few who were faithfully watching are now enjoying such a feast of truth and ever increasing light. "It is because the Master has come in, and has girded himself, and made us sit down, and has himself served us."

### **(f) C. J. WOODWORTH.**

C. J. Woodworth of Scranton, Pa., was an associate of Pastor C. T. Russell throughout his ministry and a part of his home office staff beginning about 1905. Shortly after the Pastor's death, the new leadership of the Society published in 1918 a Bible study guide purported to be the long heralded "seventh volume" and posthumous work of the Pastor, entitled *The Finished Mystery*. In reality, the first two parts of the book, on Revelation and the Song of Solomon, were prepared by C. J. Woodworth, and the third and final part, on Ezekiel, was written by G. H. Fisher. For many years controversy attended its publication, and its acceptance as the legitimate work of the Pastor was only short lived.

It is to be noted here that the actual earlier published writings of the Pastor on the subject of the seven churches (and much of the Book of Revelation) were very scanty. An article entitled "Faithful Unto Death" published in the Watch Tower in 1916 (see R. 59925993) covered the historical stages of the church, but on close scrutiny is seen to be a condensed version of W. 1. Mann's earlier series on "The Seven Churches," to which reference has already been made. This only loosely sketched the character of the periods and did not offer precise dates or suggest identities of the messengers. Such are set forth by C. J. Woodworth in his comprehensive work and are summarized in column (f).

His basis for delineating the lengths of the church eras and selecting the respective messengers is of considerable interest since he is among the first to do so with such precision and his view has been widely accepted by succeeding Bible Students. Paul is the unquestioned choice as messenger to Ephesus, with his commission by God for a special ministry, his writing of over half of the New Testament books, his extensive missionary efforts, and his "care of all the churches." The Ephesus period is ended in 73 A.D. with the fall of Masada on the authority of the historian Ewald, who in the 7th volume of his *History of Israel* cites that year as the termination of the Apostolic Age.

John is selected as the messenger to Smyrna. It is noted that he wrote more of the New Testament than any other except Paul and that Polycarp, Ignatius, and Papias, his disciples, record that he was a tower of strength to the early church when the Roman emperors Nero, Domitian, and Trajan were endeavoring to stamp out Christianity altogether. The Smyrna period is ended in 325 with the Council of Nicea and the promulgation of the Nicene Creed.

The 1160 date ending Pergamos and opening Thyatira is selected because it marked the approximate year that Peter Waldo employed a learned priest to translate the Gospels and other Bible books from the Latin into French. Thyatira is ended in 1378 with the appearance of John Wycliffe. That year is recognized as a marked turning point in Wycliffe's career, on the authority of Trench's *Mediaeval Church History*, when he devoted himself exclusively to religious

matters and took on the role of a reformer. The "space" of Rev. 2:21 is taken as a 360year period extending from Waldo's message in 1160 to Luther's time in 1520. However, this does not quite coincide with the start of Philadelphia and the Reformation, which is identified as 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his theses on the church doors at Wittenberg.

Luther, on the authority of the historian Mosheim, is recognized as the obscure monk who was suddenly thrust into the limelight to oppose, almost single-handedly and with incredible resolution, the mighty entrenched power of Rome. He thus becomes the clear choice as messenger to Philadelphia. Jesus' words to this church, "Behold I come quickly," are taken to signify that this period would end with his invisible return, beginning in 1874.

The selection of C. T. Russell as messenger to Laodicea is accompanied by a comprehensive review of his life, ministry, and remarkable accomplishments as the founder of the modern Bible Student Movement. The selection of 1918 as the end of the Laodicean period is based upon certain chronological parallels, such as that between the nominal Jewish house and the nominal Christian house. It was the author's expectation that the true Church would be glorified in the spring of that year - 1918.

**(g) R.E.STREETER.**

R.E. Streeter's *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* was one of the earliest comprehensive works on this subject from a strictly Bible Student source and became a standard reference for many years. The author drew heavily upon previous expositors of Revelation, such as E. B. Elliott, H. G. Guinness and J. Seiss, historians such as G. P. Fisher, J. L. Mosheim and E. Gibbon, as well as upon the writings of C. T. Russell. He believed that the messengers to the seven churches applied to a general class of leaders throughout the age, rather than to specific individuals. In Volume I of his work he wrote: "It would seem to be in harmony with the Scriptures to apply the term 'star' ['angels' or 'messengers' of the seven churches] to the shepherds, teachers, bishops, elders, pastors, as a class, of all the churches throughout the entire Gospel Age, and that these according to their loyalty and faithfulness are upheld by Christ. However, all the true light emanating from these, comes from the one divinely appointed source—the Prophets, Christ, and the twelve Apostles, whose teachings alone are infallible." (p. 107)

In Ephesus, the period of the early church until about 100 A.D., he finds believers faithful in their works, discipline and endurance of evil, cheerful in bearing any burden and firm in hating those practices which Christ himself hates. Yet despite these commendable qualities, there was one serious shortcoming—they had "left [their] first love." This goes beyond mere love of Truth and of truth-related activities; it implies losing love for the Lord himself. To have this condition of less than total endearment, of less than total commitment for

Christ, to become characteristic of the church as a whole, could but pave the way for apostasy and other interests entering their hearts, with far-reaching consequences. In Smyrna, he sees the period of Pagan Roman persecution of the second and third centuries. Though poor in this world's goods, the church was commended for its richness in the graces of the spirit, which stood it well in the bitter persecutions and trials of the age.

Pergamos is viewed as the period when the professed church enjoyed the patronage of the emperors and gradually, in effect, united with the world. Through a combination of Nicolaitanism (lordship over the people) and Balaamism (world affiliation), all kinds of corrupting elements were introduced which led ultimately to the church being merged into complete apostasy. Thyatira is then seen as the period which depicted "the reign of the world church, distinguishing it from the previous period of uniting with the world. Thus while the virgin church was enduring the hardships of the wilderness, the apostate church sat on the throne of her royal paramour.

Sardis is applied to the period of about two centuries before the Reformation. Its principal feature is seen to be a lack of spiritual life and activities, a void so great as to be represented as being "dead." The church professed to be Christian, but lacked the vitality to exert any measurable influence either upon its members or in proclaiming the Gospel to others. Only a very few had not been defiled and these were powerless to improve the situation. In the words of Daniel, they had been 'worn out" by a long series of bloody persecutions which reduced all witnessing and evangelical activities to silence. The Lateran Council of 1514 proudly announced that all heresies had been suppressed and that "the whole body of Christendom is now seen to be subjected to its head, i.e., to thee [Pope Leo X]."

In the prophetic sense, Philadelphia is seen to be well represented by the Protestant Reformation movement, though not limited to that period. It is also thought to include all those movements which were "true revivals that have had for their object the restoration of the true Church to primitive conditions." All such would bring together spiritually minded ones and "unite them in the bonds of love, which is the Philadelphia spirit." The "open door" set before this church, which "no man can shut," is considered to be the renewed opportunity which the Reformation afforded to proclaim the Truth. By divine providence, the way was to be opened to permit a clear testimony not only to the Lord's people, but "to the ruling powers [and] to the whole world, which had been deceived, blinded and enslaved by Papacy's erroneous teachings."

Laodicea is viewed as the condition of the church in the very closing scenes of its history, and clearly has already begun. Christ is represented as having returned, knocking at the door and ready to bless those who are willing to receive him; but only a few are aware of the event, the masses having become lukewarm to

spiritual concerns and unwilling to acknowledge their actual impoverished state. A second complete failure of Christendom is thus pictured, particularly of the daughter Protestant systems, paralleling the earlier fall of Romish Christianity prior to the Reformation. The Laodiceans see themselves as rich, increased with goods in their splendid, well attended churches, influential and respected, and in sum, in need of nothing. Thus deceived, they know not that they are actually "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"-ready to suffer the Lord's rejection and judgment. To the few who are Israelites indeed, the harvest message rings clear, 'Come out of her, my people, that ye be not par-takers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues.

## Table C: Views of Contemporary Bible Students

SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION	Historical Placement by						
	(a) NW DETROIT BIBLE STUDENTS (1976)	(b) FRANK SHALLIEU (1985)	(c) DAVID DORAN (1986)	(d) CARL HAGENSICK (1987)	(e) L.E. KIRKHAM (1987)	(f) DAVID RICE (1987)	(g) JIM PARKINSON (1988)
<b>1. EPHESUS</b> “First, desirable.”	33-96 A.D. Apostle Paul.	34-70 A.D. Apostle Paul	33-100 A.D. Apostle Paul.	33-96 A.D. Apostle Paul	33-93 A.D.? Apostle Paul	33- 90 or 100 A.D. Apostle Paul.	33-73 A.D. Apostle Peter.
<b>2. SMYRNA</b> “Bitter affliction”	96-313 Apostle John.	70-313 Apostle John.	100-313 Timothy.	96-325 Apostle John.	93?-313 (33+280=313) Apostle John.	90 or 100 -313 ?	73-313 Ignatius.
<b>3. PERGAMOS</b> “Earthly elevation”	313-1160 Arius.	313-1157 Arius	313-800 Arius.	325-799 Arius.	313-1160 (800+360=1160) Arius.	313-800 Arius.	313-539 Arius.
<b>4. THYATIRA</b> “Sweet perfume of sacrifice”	1160-1367 P. Waldo	1157-1367 P. Waldo.	800-1371 P. Waldo	799-1517 P. Waldo ?	1160-1364 P. Waldo.	800-1500 J. Wycliffe.	539-1517 Jacobus Baradaeus.
<b>5. SARDIS</b> “Remnant”	1367-1517 (150 years) J. Wycliffe.	1367-1517 (150 years) J. Wycliffe.	1371-1521 (150 years) J. Wycliffe.	1517-1648 M. Luther.	1364-1514 (150 years) J. Wycliffe.	1500 to mid or late 1700’s M. Luther.	1517-ca 1725 M. Luther.
<b>6. PHILADELPHIA</b> “Brotherly love.”	1518-1878 (360 years) M. Luther.	1517-1878 M. Luther.	1521-1874 M. Luther.	1648-1874 J. Wesley or W. Miller.	1514-1874 (360 years) M. Luther	mid/late 1700’s W. Miller.	Ca 1725-1874 J. Wesley.
<b>7. LAODICEA</b> “Justice for the people;” “Judged people.”	1878 to end of harvest C.T. Russell.	1878-1998 C.T. Russell	1874 to end of harvest C.T. Russell	1874 to end of harvest C.T. Russell	1874-? C. T. Russell	1870’s to end of harvest C.T. Russell	1874 to end of harvest C.T. Russell.

Note: Question marks represent uncertainty on the part of respective expositors.

## **Background and Explanation of Table C**

### **(a) NORTHWEST DETROIT BIBLE STUDENTS ECCLESIA.**

The Northwest Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia conducted a Revelation study that was summarized in 1976 in outline form. It references the writings of C. T. Russell and W. 1. Mann, selected historical works (by Fox, White, Bettenson, Durant, etc.) and gives additional credits to the study notes of L. P. Loomis, F. Shallieu, and W. Geisinger. Only some highlights can be noted here.

The year 96 A.D. was selected as the close of the Ephesus stage because by then all the apostles except John had passed away. The year 313 was pinpointed as the close of Smyrna due to its sudden termination of the severest period of persecution ("tribulation ten days") which nearly carried out Diocletian's boast to extinguish the Christian name and religion.

The 150-year period of Sardis (the fifth church) is based upon the parallel of events accompanying the sounding of the fifth trumpet in Rev. 9 and the five months of torment by the scorpion. Wycliffe is identified as the star falling from heaven - the respected theologian who fell from papal favor and esteem, called the "Morning Star of the Reformation." He was given the authority to release the truths locked up in darkness, and power as a scorpion to sting the cherished doctrines of papacy, though not able to deliver a death blow. This work was to proceed for five months ( $5 \times 30 = 150$  symbolic days or 150 actual years) from the 1360's until 1517 when Luther posted his theses.

The 360-year period of Philadelphia is based upon the phrase "space to repent" (Rev. 2:20,21) which was granted to symbolic Jezebel. "Space" is from chronos, interpreted as a symbolic year consisting of 360 days or 360 actual years. It would cover the Reformation and its aftermath, during which papacy could have repented and truly reformed, from 1518 when Luther's theses electrified Europe, to 1878 when Babylon was finally cast off from God's favor.

### **(b) FRANK SHALLIEU.**

Frank Shallieu is the author of the exhaustive work, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 1985, as well as being a life-long student, expositor, and study leader on Revelation. In his treatise, he provides an abundance of supportive historical data for each stage of the church.

He points out that while Paul and Peter both stand out prominently in the "apostolic era," Paul was specially chosen as the Lord's representative to the church at large and predominated in the scope and influence of his ministry. Thus he would become the clear choice as the messenger to Ephesus. He selects 70 A.D. as the end of this period, shortly after the death of Paul. He then points



to the Apostle John as the messenger to the next church, Smyrna, believing that the character of his writings corresponds largely to the message given in this era.

Arius is selected as the messenger to Pergamos because of his prominence in opposing both the theory of lordship in the church and the attempt to equate Jesus with God, as well as for the general scope and wide influence of his teachings. Peter Waldo is recognized as the messenger to Thyatira for his outstanding contributions in a dark period of the church hundreds of years prior to the Reformation. Through his efforts, the Bible was made available in manuscript form in the native tongue of the people and expounded to them.

The year 1157 is pinpointed as the early beginning of the Waldensian Movement, as nearly as can be ascertained from remaining historical records. The "space" given to Jezebel (the false church at the height of its power) to repent (Rev. 2:20,21) is seen as a period or "time" (from the Greek *chronos*) representing a symbolic year of 360 symbolic days or 360 actual years, from 1157 (the start of Waldo's ministry) to 1517, the very year that Luther nailed his theses on the church doors. It thus precisely spanned the two eras of Thyatira and Sardis, up to the start of the Reformation.

Wycliffe is seen as one of the greatest of the reformers, almost without equal in defense of the Scriptures against insurmountable odds during a period of great corruption in the church, and the relentless opposition of papacy. The length of the Sardis period during which Wycliffe and his message plagued the papal hierarchy and its false teachings is taken from Rev. 9:5, the torment of the symbolic scorpion, for five months or 150 actual years ( $5 \times 30 = 150$  symbolic days), under the fifth trumpet.

Martin Luther is recognized as the able reformer who almost single-handedly opposed the power of Rome and changed the course of history. Although assisted by other capable leaders such as Melancthon, Carlstadt, and Zwingli, and followed later by yet others such as William Miller, Luther clearly is singled out as the messenger to Philadelphia. He then directly addresses the question of how the Church of Philadelphia, with its well known meaning of "brotherly love," historically lived up to its name in the face of seemingly endless clashes between Catholic and Protestant forces. He feels the spirit of brotherly love was kindled in believers as their hearts were redirected from bondage in a corrupt church to a recognition of the true authority of the Bible. Accompanying Luther's emphasis on salvation and justification by faith was a growing realization of the brotherhood of all believers. This led to a relinquishing of hierarchical titles and a willingness to surrender selfish individual preferences for the good of the Reformation movement as a whole.

The sixth period of the church is seen as extending to the year 1878, whence C. T. Russell is credited as becoming the messenger to the seventh and last church,

Laodicea. An excellent summary of the ministry of Pastor Russell is given in the Revelation treatise and even a suggested closing date for the Gospel Age harvest - 1998. Several lines of reasoning are offered to support this date (see Part I of *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, "Seven Messages of the Apocalypse," p. 142, footnote 70).

**(c) DAVID DORAN.**

David Doran is a teacher and writer on biblical subjects and author of an in-depth article entitled, "A Scriptural Delineation of the Seven Churches, Seals, and Trumpets," 1986. He assumes, along with many students of Revelation, that the churches, seals, and trumpets are synchronous and thus utilizes historical clues from each area to help establish the dates. He also believes that the seven parables of Matt. 13 parallel the seven stages of the church. Thus Smyrna is begun at 100 A.D. because Matt. 13:25, in the second parable of the series, states "while men slept," suggesting that the twelve apostles all had died by that time. This also explains why the Apostle John is not selected as the second messenger, since he was no longer on the scene when the Smyrna period, according to this reasoning, opened. He suggests Timothy for the role instead.

The sudden end of persecution in 313 A.D. with the Edict of Milan is seen as a clear choice for the end of the Smyrna period which was characterized by bitter afflictions. He deems it appropriate to end Pergamos ("earthly elevation") at a high point of the church's rise to power and selects 800 A.D. - the crowning of Charlemagne and start of the 'papal millennium." He finds confirmation for this from Rev. 2:21, 'space to repent." If a "space" or symbolic year represents 360 actual years, then adding 360 to 800 A.D. yields 1160 A.D., into the ministry of Peter Waldo, messenger to Thyatira.

The end of Thyatira and start of Sardis is based on the beginning of a 150-year period suggested by the symbolism of Rev. 9:5,10 under the fifth trumpet, from the five-month tormenting of the scorpion. This period was experimentally fitted into key events of the period, with the most logical result considered to be from 1371 (the papa,' bull against Wycliffe) to 1521 (the papal excommunication of Luther).

The end of Sardis and beginning of the Reformation and the Philadelphia period is thus fixed at 1521. Confirmation for the ending of the sixth church in 1874 with the start of Laodicea is found from Rev. 3:20, with the returned Lord standing at the door, and Rev. 11:15, the sounding of the seventh angel and transfer of control of the earthly kingdom to Christ.

**(d) CARL HAGENSICK.**

Carl Hagensick is a teaching elder and convention speaker on a wide range of Bible topics, with special interest in prophetic areas. He ends the Pergamos period in 799 when papacy had firmly established its control. Peter Waldo is a tentative choice for the messenger to Thyatira, with its period extended to 1517, the year that Luther posted his sensational 95 theses. Luther is the clear choice for Sardis, considered the church of the Reformation, extending to 1648. This latter date is selected because it marked the end of the 30 Years' War between Catholics and Protestants. Either John Wesley or William Miller is then suggested as the messenger to the Philadelphia Church, considered as the period of Protestant expansion following the Reformation. This continues until the Laodicean or harvest period begins in 1874.

**(e) L. E. KIRKHAM.**

Lawrence Kirkham is a long-standing student of the Bible and scholarly expositor with special interest in church history. He reinforces the traditional periods and messengers of the churches as generally set forth by the Bible Students. He suggests seven characteristics that are shared by all the messengers: (1) They are well known to students of history. (2) They offered a distinctive, timely message. (3) They defended the Truth of Scripture. (4) They were closely related to the recording, translation or explanation of the Bible. (5) They were active in the public ministry. (6) They guided the true church in difficult times. (7) They were faithful unto death.

**(f) DAVID RICE.**

David Rice, with wide-ranging Bible study interests, is a close student of Revelation and speaker on apocalyptic subjects. He suggests shortening the Pergamos period so that it ends in 800 A.D. when Charlemagne was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III and lengthening Thyatira by extending it to 1500 A.D. He views Wycliffe as the messenger to Thyatira and finds support for this by the reference to the "morning star" in Rev. 2:28 (in the Thyatira period); though primarily a reference to Jesus, the description could aptly apply to Wycliffe in a secondary sense from the standpoint of his reputation as the "morning star" of the Reformation.

Luther is regarded as the messenger to Sardis, from 1500 to perhaps the mid or late 1700's, with the French Revolution as a possible turning point. Sardis thus becomes the church of the Reformation, seemingly corroborated by the thought of repenting in Rev. 3:3 and receiving white robes in Rev. 3:4 (both during the Sardis period). The white garments are considered symbolic of that church's own justification which is linked with the stand of the Reformation church for justification by faith. The period of the Philadelphia Church is then narrowed from the mid or late 1700's to the 1870's and William Miller selected as its

messenger. The "open door" of Rev. 3:8 (during the Philadelphia period) is linked to the new era of interest in Bible study that opened up following the antichrist's loss of persecuting power. This continues into the Laodicean or harvest period beginning in the 1870's.

**(g) JIM PARKINSON.**

Jim Parkinson is a Bible study leader and researcher with special interest in prophetic areas and author of the article, "Revelation Made Easy," 1982. He sees seven logical divisions of the Gospel Age: under the Jews, then Heathen Rome, Imperial Rome (usually professedly Christian), Papal Rome, the Reformation, Protestant Expansion, and finally the Harvest. He employs two criteria for the messengers: (1) They must deliver the respective messages that the Revelator had assigned for their period. (2) They must begin their activity at the beginning of the period in order to be a messenger to the whole church of that era.

His datings and especially his choices of messengers show some variation from the traditional view: Peter is selected for the Ephesus period on the basis of Jesus' words to him, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Ignatius' epistles seem impressive to cover the message to Smyrna, of endurance under persecution. The beginning of papal power seems sharply marked about 538 to 540 A.D., opening the Thyatira period; Jacobus Baradaeus is selected for this long era because of widespread influence of his ("Monophysite") teaching that Jesus on earth was of one nature only-the human nature (in contrast both to the Coptics, who taught that the one nature was divine, and to the Catholic/Orthodox, who teach that Jesus was simultaneously both human and divine). He is convinced that Baradaeus was widely recognized in the early Dark Ages, although admittedly almost unknown among Christians today.

Luther is regarded as the angel to the Sardis Church with the -for the Philadelphia Church, with message , Reform"; Wesley, the message, "Love." He sees little brotherly love expressed during the Reformation. Then coming to the final period of church history, the harvest of the Laodicean period, he observes this should have begun no later than the beginning of the restoration of Israel to their land. He notes also that Jesus' declaration, "I stand at the door and knock" in this last letter contrasts sharply with his "I come" expressions in the earlier letters and clearly implies a progressive time sequence of the seven churches.

## **Views of Additional Contemporary Bible Students**

Though not summarized in the table, the following sources are mentioned to round out this discussion. All are Bible Students of recognized ability who have made significant contributions to understanding the Book of Revelation. And all have expressed basic confidence in the seven traditional historical periods of the churches, with very minor suggested changes.

### **(h) EUGENE BURNS.**

Eugene Burns is the author of a detailed "interpreted (or de-signified) rendering" of the Book of Revelation that has seen wide circulation among the Bible Students through the years. He calls attention to the fact that the message was always directed to the angel of each church and not to the church itself. This indicates that 'each messenger must have delivered a powerful message in the blowing of the trumpet for which he was prepared to sound.' This establishes two strong criteria in identifying the messengers: (1) They would have to be very visible in biblical or church history; and (2) They would have delivered a message that affected the church in its time and place.

While adhering closely to the traditional choices for both messengers and time periods, he adds the Apostle Peter's name to that of Paul for the Ephesus period. He believes that Peter was on the scene and active in this role before Paul became established as a prominent voice.

### **(i) DAVID DINWOODIE.**

David Dinwoodie (deceased) divides the Gospel Age into seven parts as follows; (1) Lives of the Apostles, to 73 A.D. (2) Pagan Persecution, to 325 A.D. (3) Rise of Papacy, to 539 A.D. (4) Church in the Wilderness and False Church in Power, to 1378. (5) Pre-Reformation, to 1518. (6) Reformation and Aftermath, to 1874. (7) Gathering of the True Church in the Harvest. He does not name individual messengers to the churches, other than C. T. Russell to the final, or Laodicean Church.

### **(j) GEORGE ELDRIDGE.**

George Eldridge, while appreciating that the messages were given to seven individual churches and apply both in the early church and progressively, stresses that the details fit the "one Church of the Living God and the experiences of every member." He also suggests shortening the Pergamos period to within just the fourth century during the time of Arius and expanding the following period of Thyatira to 1290 A.D. He believes the identification of Arius, Waldo and Wycliffe respectively as messengers of their periods is not as clearly established as for the other messengers.

### **(k) LUDLOW LOOMIS.**

Ludlow Loomis (deceased) is the much beloved author of comprehensive study notes on Revelation. He accepts the overall historical application of the messages to seven progressive periods as outlined by W. 1. Mann in the Tower articles already cited. He then comments on details as follows: He sees the "ten days" of Rev. 2: 10 in the Smyrna period as the ten years of severe persecution from the edict of Diocletian (303 A.D.) to the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.). He identifies Arius as the messenger to the Pergamos Church who opposed the creed teaching that "the Father was the Son."

He links the "star fall[ing] from heaven" in Rev. 9:1 with Wycliffe, the angel of Sardis, who lost his prestigious position in the university and was persecuted as a heretic. Wycliffe's translation of the Bible and 200 other works, mainly defending the ransortt, are symbolized by the locusts "like unto horses" (doctrines, teachings) of Rev. 9:3,7, which served to "torment" (but not to "kill" as in the Reformation period to follow). For a period of five months or 150 years (5 x 30), from Wycliffe's start (around 1367) to Luther's start (1517-18), "men" or professing Christians were not brought out of the papal system, but merely tormented with the newly proclaimed truth.

He sees Philadelphia as the period of the Reformation and its aftermath, lasting 360 years from 1517-18 to 1878, with Luther as its messenger. He finds confirmation for the 360 years from Rev. 9:15, which speaks of four angels prepared for events of varying lengths of time, including 'a year.' Thus 360 days (or years) are derived from the symbolic year into which Luther, as one of the angels, was thrust. He sees William Miller a possible choice as the angel "prepared for the month" (30 symbolic days or literal years), from the Adventist disappointment in 1844 to our Lord's parousia in 1874.

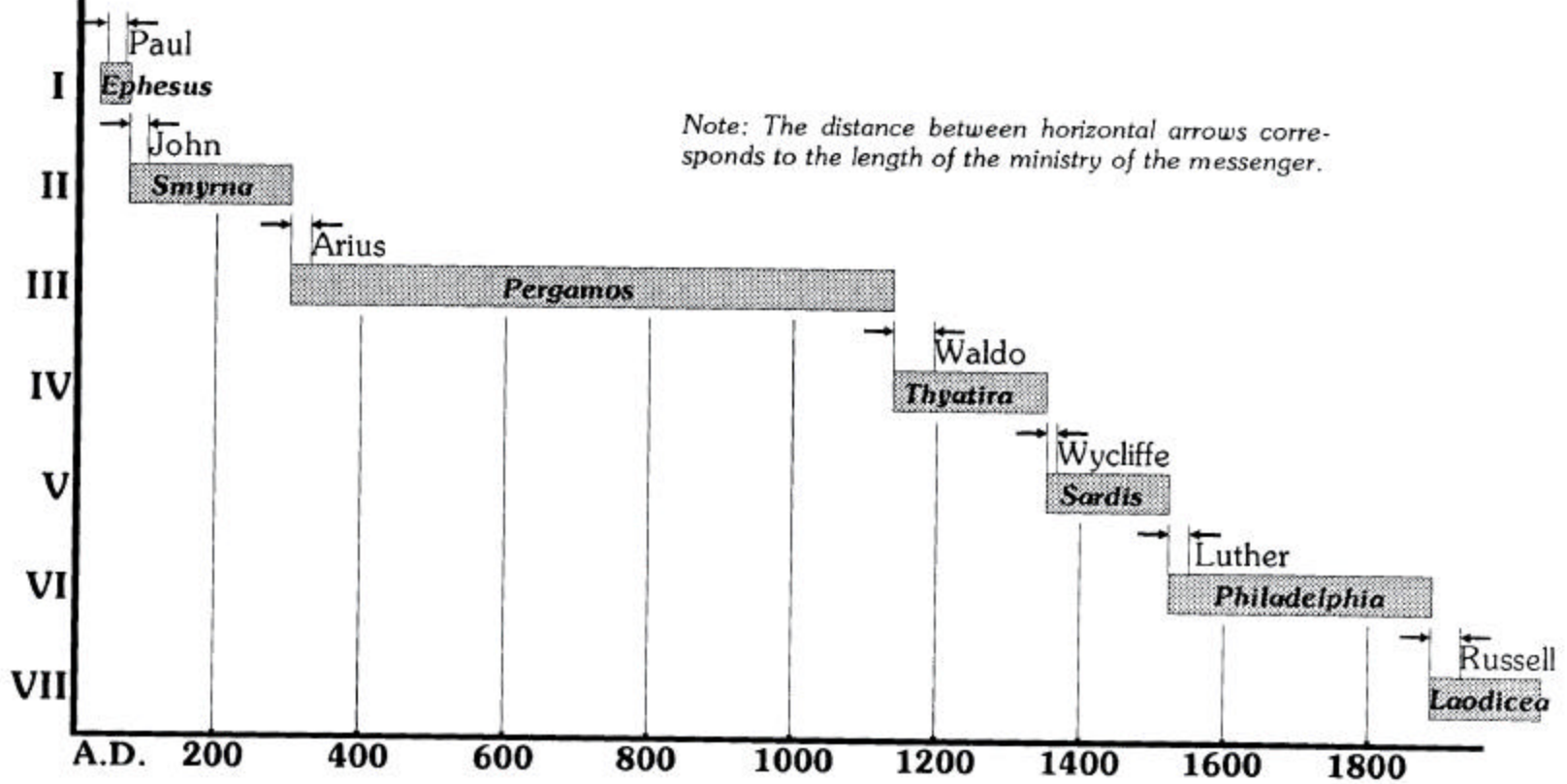
Nelson Barbour, editor of "The Herald of the Morning" and an early co-worker of Bro. Russell, may have been the third angel, associated with the 'day.' This leads directly to the Laodicean period and the angel "prepared for the hour" - the harvest time of gathering the true wheat, "the hour of temptation" (Rev. 3:10), "the hour of His judgment" (Rev. 14:7), "the hour of authority" (Rev. 17:12, *Diaglott*) and 'the hour' of destruction (Rev. 18:10,17,19). Bro. C. T. Russell is "beyond doubt the 'angel' prepared for this 'hour,' and he became its messenger (angel)."

**Table D:**  
**Datings of Church Periods and Messengers**  
 [Composite of Traditional Views]

	<b>Church Period</b>	<b>Ministry of Messenger</b>
<b>I</b>	Ephesus 33-70 A.D.	Paul 35-64 A.D.
<b>II</b>	Smyrna 70-313	John 70-100
<b>III</b>	Pergamos 313-1157	Arius 313-336
<b>IV</b>	Thyatira 1157-1367	Waldo 1157-1217
<b>V</b>	Sardis 1367-1517	Wycliffe 1367-1384
<b>VI</b>	Philadelphia 1517-1874	Luther 1517-1546
<b>VII</b>	Laodicea 1874 to ?	Russell 1874-1916

# Chart A: Seven Churches and Messengers on the Stream of History

[Composite of Traditional Views]





## Observations and Conclusions

From a careful study of the events of the long period of the history of the Christian church, it does indeed appear to be plausible to view its development as seven distinct stages that parallel the messages to the seven churches of Revelation. Many prophetic expositors of the past have drawn this conclusion, as already noted, and certainly this continues to be the main current of present Bible Student thinking. Some observers have felt it was not possible always to draw fine lines of separation between the periods and believed that the seven "angels" or messengers represented a class of leaders throughout the age, rather than individuals assigned those responsibilities. Yet others, including the writer, have felt strongly that close students of history and the Book of Revelation can identify both the periods and the particular individuals serving as messengers to a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Certainly for two hundred years there has been virtual concurrence on the first four stages: **Ephesus**, that of the apostolic church, when truths were held in basic purity; **Smyrna**, the early persecutions of pagan Rome and beginnings of doctrinal corruption; **Pergamos**, the rise of papacy and compromise with the world; and **Thyatira**, the reign of the apostate church, the counterfeit to the true Kingdom of God, which brought on the dark ages of the civilized world and the near extinction of the saints. For the next two periods, **Sardis** and **Philadelphia**, some differences of view were evident. But in the past century, a consensus has emerged which appears reasonable and might be termed the traditional or common view of the Bible Students, though there are some notable exceptions. The majority identify **Philadelphia** with the Reformation movement and **Sardis** as the brief interval just prior to it. **Laodicea** is then almost always taken as the lukewarm end-time church, identified with the harvest message, "Come out of her, my people."

The chart on the previous page, "Seven Churches and Messengers on the Stream of History," is a graphical portrayal of the composite view. Drawn to scale, it allows the lengths of the periods to be compared visually, along with the ministries of each of the messengers. Two points become startlingly clear from the chart: First, that several of the church stages cover long periods of time, with Pergamos the most outstanding in this regard. Thus Arius is credited as its messenger for over 800 years, as the light of truth grew dimmer and dimmer. Strange as it may seem, a search of history reveals no other champion of truth of his stature throughout this period until Waldo appears on the scene. And second, it is typical of the ministries of the messengers that these are relatively short as compared to the overall lengths of the various stages of the church which they are credited with guiding and that they appear at the beginning of these respective periods. Thus the fact that we are yet benefiting from the ministry of the seventh messenger long after his death should not seem inappropriate; such was simply the pattern throughout the Gospel Age.

Now we would like to summarize briefly why we believe the traditional view is correct and deserves our support. First, pertaining to the periods: **Ephesus**, from the Pentecostal blessing to about 70 A.D. The latter date, marking the fall of Jerusalem, seems a significant transition from the early period of Jewish influence dominated by Paul's ministry to the phase of rapid expansion into the Gentile world. **Smyrna**, from 70 A.D. to 313 and the Edict of Milan, again seems well marked, with the ending point accepted almost universally, since it brought to a close the bitter afflictions that characterized the period. **Pergamos**, from 313 to 1157, follows F. Shallieu's research which pinpoints the latter date as the early beginning of the Waldensian movement. This synchronizes exactly with the 360-year "space" to repent given to Jezebel (Rev. 2:20,21), extending from 1157 to 1517 (Thyatira through Sardis), the very year that Luther nailed his theses on the church doors at Wittenberg. Any attempt to shorten Pergamos, for example to 800 A.D., the year of Charlemagne's crowning by the pope and the start of the "papal millennium," runs into a double snag: there is no champion of truth to replace

Arius prior to Waldo; and if Waldo is selected as the messenger to Thyatira, he would not appear on the scene (1157) for hundreds of years after the start of the stage of the church which he is credited with overseeing, a premise that seems most unreasonable.

**Thyatira**, from 1157 to 1367, then seems substantiated by the latter date's opening of the 150-year (five month) stinging of the locusts (Rev. 9:5, under the sounding of the fifth trumpet which parallels the fifth stage of the church), which so markedly characterized Wycliffe's tormenting attacks upon the papal system, extending to the very beginning of the Reformation movement (1517). **Sardis**, from 1367 to 1517, is thus clearly delineated by this 150-year period. **Laodicea**, the end-time church beginning with our Lord's presence and knocking at the door (Rev. 3:20), would extend from 1874 to the full end of the harvest period. **Philadelphia**, the church of the Reformation and subsequent Protestant expansion, would then be cradled between 1517 and 1874.

The Philadelphia period brings into focus a couple of interesting points which should be addressed. The "open door" of Rev. 3:8 seems to be a strong key unlocking the main activity that characterized this stage. Prior to this time the forces of darkness had prevailed to the point where the light bearers had been worn out and almost totally suppressed, so that true witnessing work was virtually at a standstill. Then came Luther's daring proclamations that set all Europe aflame and brought about a sweeping change in conditions that opened the floodgate of truth and began a process that has continued ever since. We are strongly persuaded that the descriptive picture of the "open door" is best seen as beginning in the Reformation movement.

Then the matter of how the Church of Philadelphia lived up to the meaning of its name, "brotherly love." Again, following up on the reasoning of F. Shallieu, it was hardly to be expected that all believers could at once catch the spirit of their newfound Bible truths and suppress all bitterness toward the corrupt church that had kept them in bondage so long. Yet in coming to a fuller understanding of the great love of the Heavenly Father toward them, it was inevitable that their appreciation of one another as fellow believers in Christ would also grow. Such a growing realization of the fellowship and close ties of all believers and their privileged standing before God, as contrasted with the dictatorial and hierarchical structure of the established church, would surely have kindled the spirit of brotherly love for each other in their hearts.

Next, some comments pertaining to the messengers: **Paul's** ministry in the early church was so outstanding as to make him the almost universal choice as the first "angel." Highlights are his special commission by God, authoring most of the New Testament books, providing the doctrinal foundation for the Christian faith, extensive missionary efforts and care of all the early churches. The Apostle **John** seems logical as the overseer for the second church, having received the visions of Revelation, authoring four additional books of the New Testament, and offering by way of teaching and example great encouragement to the believers during the period of intense persecution by pagan Rome.

**Arius** is universally selected as the shining light for Pergamos on the basis of his leading role in defending the early church's view of Jesus as the created Son of God and resisting mounting efforts to equate him with the Father. **Waldo** seems a strong choice as the guide for Thyatira, considering his translation of the Bible into the common tongue and his effective ministry for the truth in a very dark period of the church's history. **Wycliffe** likewise stands out as the messenger to Sardis and seems fully deserving of the wide acclaim given to him for his relentless opposition to Papacy, outstanding work as an early reformer, and first translation of the complete Bible into English.

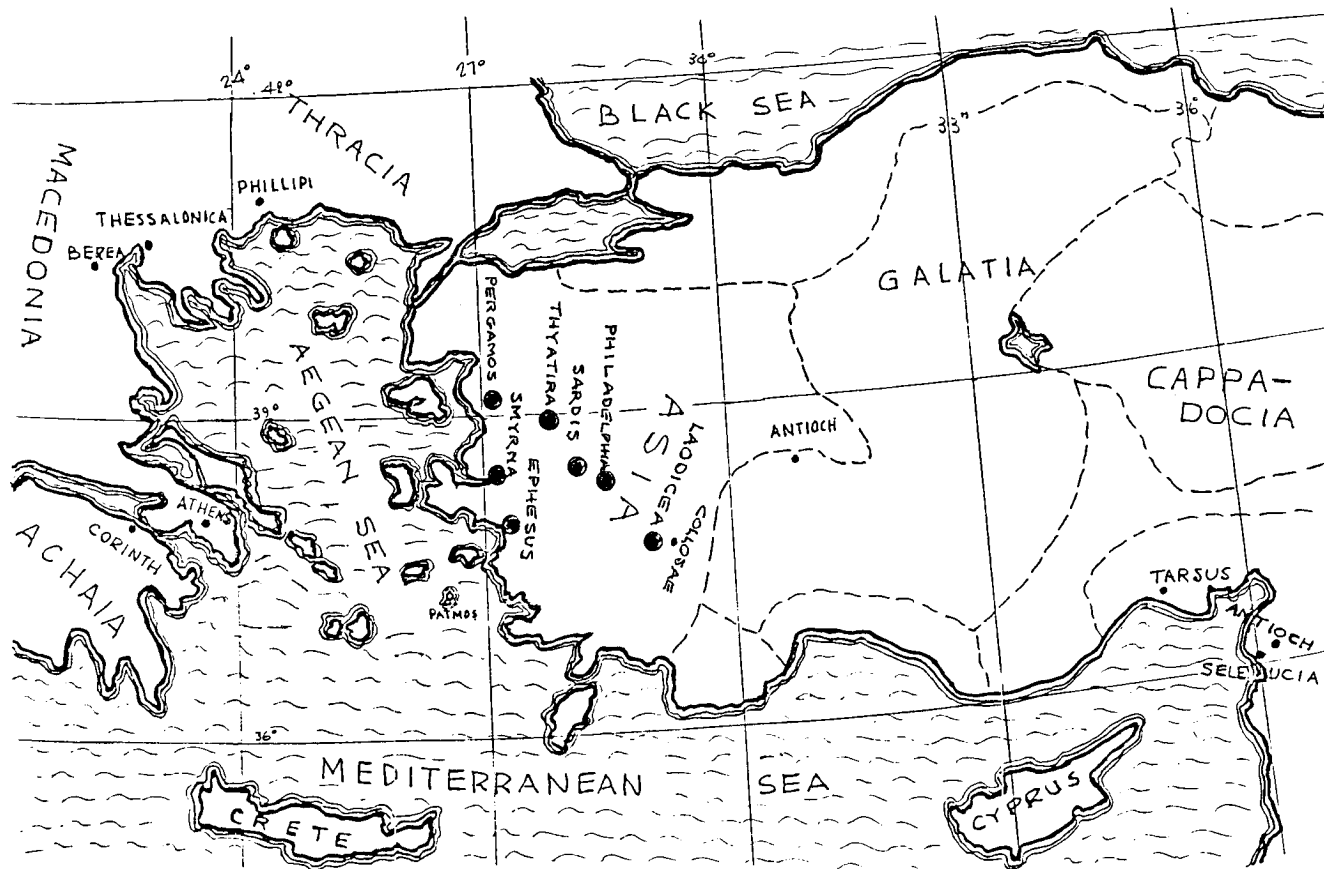
**Luther**, though one of many leaders of the Reformation movement, clearly was its moving force and rightly should be recognized as the overseer to the Philadelphia church. His accomplishments were truly extraordinary: powerful sermons and writings that shook all Europe, shattered the claims of Rome and initiated the founding of widespread protest movements; translation of the Bible into the vernacular and restoring it to its rightful place of authority among men; and steadfast opposition to the fundamental errors and abuses of the papal system in the face of personal threats and overwhelming odds.

Finally, **C. T. Russell** is seen to emerge as the messenger to Laodicea and the harvest church. His unique contributions have given rise to unanimous recognition and acclaim for such a position: a Bible-centered ministry that stressed Christ's ransom sacrifice, revealed the Divine Plan of the Ages for

blessing all mankind, discarded errors of the past, clarified the High Calling, opened an awareness of the end times and the parousia of Christ, and especially called attention to the imminent establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.

In bringing this study to a close, we are reminded of the foreknowledge of our great God as displayed in the progressive unfolding of the prophetic messages to the seven churches of Revelation. We see His majestic hand in the outworking of the affairs of the church, both true and nominal, while recognizing also that there has been no interference in the exercise of man's free moral agency. The drama that has unfolded has been an exciting one, though saddened with the accounts of suffering, persecution, and privation for the faithful few.

With the events of the harvest and end times fully upon us, we realize that the course of the saints is rapidly nearing its completion this side of the veil. Let those who remain of the overcomer class rejoice greatly that their faithfulness is soon to be rewarded in complete victory with Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, leaving all apostate elements exposed and destroyed forever. And may this realization stir the Lord's people to yet further zeal in His service, doing with their might what their hands find to do. Let us work while it is called day; for "the night cometh when no man can work."-John 9:4



Location of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor

## **Revelation:**

### **A Coded Message - A Special Blessing**

*In reading through the Book of Revelation  
How seemingly very little it reveals -  
With angels, churches, stars that fall from heaven,  
And candlesticks, trumpets, beasts, and woes and seals.*

*Plus horses, scorpions, locusts, plagues and lightnings,  
A dragon, a Lamb, a throne, beheaded souls:  
Its symbols paint some mystifying pictures  
As vision by vision swiftly it unfolds.*

*Its author, God, designed to give His servants  
Who earnestly seek His will to know and do,  
An understanding rich and full of meaning.  
The message is coded; meant for just the few.*

*Its contents guide their steps and give them courage  
To faithfully follow Jesus, come what may.  
Their hearts are firmly set on things of Heaven;  
No worldly allurements draw them from the way.*

*The Book sets forth, in visions strong and vivid,  
The course of the church throughout the Gospel Age.  
As each successive era comes in focus,  
Related events of history cross its stage.*

*The early church, with doctrines pure and holy,  
Were zealous to spread God's truth both far and near.  
The world's reproach and hatred could not stop them;  
The Master's return and Kingdom were so dear.*

*As time went on and errors gained a foothold,  
The nominal church increased in wealth and might.  
Though few, there still remained some worthy Christians  
Who patiently walked in ways of truth and light.*

*Their pattern, Jesus, trod the path before them.  
His faithfulness led to death on Calvary's cross.  
His saints sought God's acclaim, not worldly honor,  
Rejoicing to serve in toil and pain and loss.*

*The precious truths grew dim and almost perished;  
A counterfeit system reigned with brutal power.  
In every era God brought forth a spokesman  
To fearlessly give the message for the hour.*

*The Reformation came, and then the Harvest:  
This seventh and final stage is well along.  
The end is near; true saints are ever watchful.  
The struggle goes on; temptations still are strong.*

*The Book holds forth a blessing now and future  
To those who take heed and keep its precepts true.  
They'll gain the grand reward and reign with Jesus,  
Mankind to uplift when all things are made new.*

E. L. R.

"The Lord God ... sent his angel to show his servants the things which must shortly be done ... blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."

-Rev. 22:6,7.

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