

# DOWNLOAD PDF THE EPISTLES OF OUR LORD TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

## Chapter 1 : Trench, Richard - Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches In Asia - Bible Support

*The Last Day of Our Lord's Passion by William Hanna Lutheran Teacher-Training Series For the Sunday School, Prepared Under the Direction of the Sunday School Literature Committee of the Board of the Lutheran Publication Society by Arthur H. Smith.*

We instinctively feel that for any one else there would have been. The unique position in the Church of St. John, the beloved Apostle, and now the sole surviving Apostle, the one remaining link between the faithful of this time and the earthly life of their Lord, abundantly justified in him that which would have ill become any other; just as a king or queen, as representative persons in a nation, will sign by their Christian names only, but not any other besides. Despite all which has been urged to avoid this conclusion, it is assuredly either John the Apostle and Evangelist who writes the Apocalypse; or one who, assuming his style and title, desires to pass himself off as John—in other words a falsarius. Are the opposers of St. Of the seven Churches which St. John addresses here I reserve to speak in particular when we reach the nominal enumeration of them ver. We may trace two opposite movements going on in the names of countries, analogous to like movements which are continually finding place in other words. Sometimes they grow more and more inclusive, are applied in their later use to far wider tracts of the earth than they were in their earlier. Some names, on the other hand, of the widest reach at the beginning, gradually contract their meaning, till in the end they designate no more than a minute fraction of that which they designated at the beginning. Of this larger Epistle, namely the Apocalypse itself, these seven Churches are the original receivers; not as having a nearer or greater interest in it than any other portion of the Universal Church; though as members of that Church they have an interest in it as near and great as can be conceived. And being such an Epistle, it opens with the most frequently recurring apostolic salutation: Peter in both his Epistles; while St. And then, on the other hand, there is every thing to recommend the grammatical interpretation. What is the key-note to this whole Book? The world seems to have all things its own way, to kill my servants; but I come quickly. Origen further notes the evidence which this language, rightly interpreted, yields for the equal divinity of the Son with the Father De Princ. Qui enim venturus est, quis est alius nisi Christus? And these have not been merely Roman Catholic expositors, such as Bossuet and Ribera, tempted to this interpretation by their zeal for the worshipping of Angels; but others with no such temptations, as Beza, Hammond, Mede in a sermon on Zech. They claim some of the Fathers for predecessors in the same line of interpretation; Hilary, for example, Tract. Clement of Alexandria is also claimed by Hammond; but neither in the passage cited nor in the context Strom. But this interpretation, which after all is that only of a small minority either of ancients or moderns, must be rejected without hesitation. Again, how is it possible to conceive the Apostle desiring grace and peace to the Church from the Angels, let them be the chiefest Angels which are, and not from God alone? Neither need there be any difficulty in reconciling this interpretation, as Mede urges, with the doctrine of his personality. The matter could not be put better than it is by Richard of St. The manifold gifts, operations, energies of the Holy Ghost are here represented under the number seven, being, as it is, the number of completeness in the Church. We have anticipations of this in the Old Testament. When the prophet Isaiah would describe how the Spirit should be given not by measure to Him whose name is The Branch, the enumeration of the gifts is sevenfold xi. Testis fidelis, quia reprobis damnationem, et electis salvationem nunciavit. Testis fidelis, quia veritatem quam verbis docuit, miraculis confirmavit. Testis fidelis, quia testimonium Sibi a Patre nec in morte negavit. Testis fidelis, quia de operibus malorum et bonorum in die iudicii testimonium verum dabit. The officious emendations of transcribers have caused a large number of these, though not this-one, to disappear from our received text; but in any critical edition of the Greek original we are struck by their immense multitude. To regard these, which some have done, as evidences of St. Rather, we should say, to take the case immediately before us, the doctrinal interest here overbears the grammatical. The phrases are not precisely identical in meaning; and even were they so, the suggestion of Hengstenberg, that St. John here builds upon St. Glorious as this language is,

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who does not feel how easily two Apostles, quite independent of one another, might have arrived at it to express the same blessed truth? There was for them no repeal of the sentence of death, but a respite only; not to say that even during their period of respite they carried about with them a body of death. Christ first so rose from the dead, that He did not, and could not, die any more Rom. On that verse in Ps. The weight of external evidence is so nearly balanced that it is very difficult to say on which side it predominates. A fuller doxology, being threefold, occurs iv. Jude 25 ; and the fullest of all, the sevenfold doxology, at vii. A study of these, and a comparison of them with one another, would amply repay the pains bestowed upon it; above all, if it served to remind us of the prominence which the doxological element assumes in the highest worship of the Church, the very subordinate place which it oftentimes takes in ours. We can perhaps make our requests known unto God; and this is well, for it is prayer; but to give glory to God, quite apart from anything to be directly gotten by ourselves in return, this is better, for it is adoration; but it is rarer also, no less than better. But it is not so here. There is indeed a turn, yet not from the severe to the gracious, but the contrary. The words of the prophet Zechariah xii. But it cannot be denied that in their adaptation here they speak quite another language. They set forth the despair of the sinful world, of all the tribes of the earth cf. Thus Clement of Alexandria Strom. This, grand an attribute as it is of the Godhead Heb. It is one of the many points of resemblance, small and great, between this Book and that of Daniel. It may have been suggested by 1 Pet. The fulfilment 35 of this promise and prophecy as it regarded his brother James is plain; when the sword of Herod was dyed with his blood Acts xii. It was answered rightly by Origen long ago In Matt. John does not assume his readers to be familiar with it, any more than St. Mark, writing for those living at a distance from Palestine, with the Jordan cf. It is not so that a well-known island, Crete or Cyprus, is introduced Acts xiii. The deportation of criminals, or those accounted as such, to rocky and desolate islands was, as is well known, a common punishment among the Romans. The unprejudiced reader will hardly be persuaded that St. It is difficult not to think that these interpreters have been unconsciously influenced by a desire to get rid of the strong testimony for St. The Apocalypse, it is worth observing by the way, has all internal evidence of having been thus written in time of persecution and by a confessor of the truth. The whole Book breathes the very air of martyrdom. Oftentimes slighted by the Church in times of prosperity, it is made much of, and its preciousness, as it were, instinctively discovered, in times of adversity and fiery trial. This Bengel has well 38 observed: *Africana Ecclesia, cruci magis obnoxia, semper hunc librum plurimi fecit.* How often does he seek, now to strengthen the faithful with the promises, and now to terrify the fearful with the threatenings, of this Book Scorp. But here, and at iv. Paul exactly describes the experience of one who has passed through this state, 2 Cor. That world of spiritual realities is one from which man is comparatively estranged so long as he dwells in this house of clay; he has need to be transported out of himself, before he can find himself in the midst of and come into direct contact with it. Separated in body from the fellowship of the faithful, the beloved Apostle was yet keeping with them the weekly feast of the resurrection on the day which the Lord had made for ever peculiarly 40 his own. This, however, seems a mistake. The name had probably its origin here. Dionysius of Corinth, quoted by Eusebins, II.

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### Chapter 2 : Chapter The Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse - Bible Study Tools

*The epistles of our Lord to the seven churches of Asia [microform] The epistles of our Lord to the seven churches of Asia [microform] by Dods, Marcus,*

It is the province of Asia comp. Such a view needs no formal refutation. The anxiety for circumstantial and limited fulfilments of prophecy has been at the root of such attempts. In this sense the churches are types and representatives of the whole family of God. Every community may find its likeness here. This much is admitted by the best commentators of all schools. Grace be unto you, and peace. John, adopt the same salutation. Not only is this a kind of link of Christian fellowship between them, but its adoption by St. Paul had first used it, is a slight token that the Apocalypse cannot be regarded as some recent critics would have it as an anti-Pauline treatise. As the Christian greeting, it transcends while it embraces the Greek and Hebrew salutations. There is no tinge of the sadness of separation; it is the greeting of hope and repose, grounded on the only true foundation of either, the grace of God, which is the well-spring of life and love. From him which is, and which was, and which is to come or, which cometh. If in Exodus 3: The greeting is triple: The first phrase would therefore seem to designate God the Father, the self-existing, eternal One, the fount and origin of all existence. Professor Plumptre suggests that the phrase used here may be used in allusion and contrast to the inscription spoken of by Plutarch, on the Temple of Isis, at Sais: From the seven Spirits. The context makes it impossible to admit any other meaning than that the greeting which comes from the Father and the Son comes also from the Holy Spirit sevenfold in His operations, whose gifts are diffused among all the churches, and who divides to every man severally as He will. For corresponding thoughts in the Old Testament, compare the seven lamps and seven eyes of Zechariah Zechariah 3: This unity in diversity is the thought St. Paul seems anxious to keep before the minds of the Corinthians, lest their gifts should become the source of division. All work that one and self-same spirit 1Corinthians The after-recurrence in this book of the number seven is, I think, selected to support this thought of completeness and variety; the dramatic unity is preserved, though the scenes which are unfolded are amply diversified; and the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials, are not three successive periods, but three aspects of one complete period presided over by that one Spirit whose guidance may be seen in all ages, and in diverse ways. The Spirits are before the throne. This reference to the throne gives a touch of authority to the description. The former days of blessed nearness had not faded from his memory; rather he understood their meaning better than when he was in the midst of their sweetness. He sees Him now invested with these lofty attributes, and, so to speak, involved in the brightness of the Throne of God. The fact that they do so occur points a question: Is it possible to conceive that the writer of these words thought of Jesus Christ as less than divine? A strange Trinity that would be, most certainly. But where did John get this word? For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. The witness of what? What was the substance of His testimony? It was a testimony mainly about God. His revelation is no mere revelation by words. Plenty of men have talked about God, and said noble and true and blessed things about Him. It is one thing to speak about God in words, maxims, precepts; it is another thing to show us God in act and life. The one is theology, the other is gospel. The one is the work of man, the other is the exclusive prerogative of God manifested in the flesh. In all these, He is showing us not only the sweetness of a perfect human character, but in the sweetness of a perfect human character, the sweeter sweetness of our Father, God. The substance of His testimony is the Name, the revelation of the character of His Father and our Father. The task of a witness is to affirm; his business is to tell his story-not to argue about it, simply to state it. All His teaching is characterized by what would be insane presumption in any of us, and would at once rule us out of court as unfit to be listened to on any grave subject, most of all on religious truth. For His method is this: Take it on My word. You ask Me for proof of My saying: I am the proof of it; I assert it. That is enough for you! Grace is poured into Thy lips. A faithful witness is an eye-witness. And that is what Christ claims when He witnesses about God. We never see Him in the act of arriving at a truth, nor detect any traces of the

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process of forming opinions in Him. He speaks as if He had seen, and His tone is that of one who is not thinking out truth or grasping at it, but simply narrating that which lies plain and clear ever before His eyes. I do not ask you what that involves, but I quote His own statement of what it involves: Surely the one thing that the world wants is to have the question answered whether there really is a God in Heaven that cares anything about me, and to whom I can trust myself wholly; believing that He will lift me out of all my meannesses and sins, and make me clean and pure and blessed like Himself. Surely that is the deepest of all human needs, howsoever little men may know it. And sure I am that none of us can find the certitude of such a Father unless we give credence to the message of Jesus Christ our Lord. This day needs that witness as much as any other; sometimes in our unbelieving moments, we think more than any other. There is a wave-I believe it is only a wave-passing over the cultivated thought of Europe at present which will make short work of all belief in a God that does not grip fast to Jesus Christ. As far as I can read the signs of the times, and the tendency of modern thinking, it is this: The Theism that has shaken itself loose from Him will be crushed; I am sure, in the encounter with the agnosticism and the materialism of this day. And the one refuge is to lay fast hold of the old truth: Without His testimony you will be the sport of fears, and doubts, and errors. Grace and peace come from the faithful Witness. We have grace and peace from the Conqueror of Death. What a strange feeling that must have been for Lazarus and the others, to go twice through the gates of death; twice to know the pain and the pang of separation! And how is it that grace and peace come to us from the risen Witness? Two or three words may be said about that. Think how, first of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the confirmation of His testimony. In it the Father, to whom He hath borne witness in His life and death, bears witness to Christ, that His claims were true and His work well-pleasing. If He be no more and naught else than a man, altogether like the rest of us, then there is an end to any special revelation of the Divine nature, heart, purposes, and will, in His works and character. They may still be beautiful, they may still reveal God in the same sense in which the doings of any good man suggest a fontal source of goodness from which they flow, but beyond that they are nothing. So all the truth, and all the peace, all the grace and hope which flow to us from the witness of Jesus Christ to the Father, are neutralized and destroyed unless we believe in the resurrection from the dead. His words may still remain gracious, and true in a measure, only all dashed with the terrible mistake that He asserted that He would rise again, and rose not. But as for His life, it ceases to be in any real sense, because it ceases to be in any unique sense, the revelation to the world of the character of God. If you pull out that keystone, down comes the arch. There may still be fair carving on some of the fallen fragments, but it is no longer an arch that spans the great gulf, and has a firm pier on the other side. Strike away the resurrection and you fatally damage the witness of Jesus. You cannot strike the supernatural out of Christianity, and keep the natural. The two are so inextricably woven together that to wrench away the one lacerates the other, and makes it bleed, even to death. If Christ be not risen we have nothing to preach, and you have nothing to believe. Our preaching and your faith are alike vain: Faith in the resurrection gives us a living Lord to confide in-not a dead Lord, whose work we may look back upon with thankfulness; but a living one, who works now upon us, and by whose true companionship and real affection strength and help are granted to us every day. The cold frost of death has not congealed that stream of love that poured from His heart while He lived on earth; it flows yet for each of us, for all of us, for the whole world. My brother, we cannot do without a living Christ to stand beside us, to sympathize, to help, to love. We cannot do without a living Christ with whom we may speak, who will speak to us. And that communion which is blessedness, that communication of power and righteousness which is life, are only possible, if it be true that His death was not the end of His relationship to us, or of His work in the world, but was only a transition from one stage of that work to another. And the grace and peace flow to us not only from the contemplation of the past witness of the Lord, but are showered upon us from the open hands of the risen and living Christ. He has been raised from the dead; therefore death is not the destruction of conscious life. He has been raised from the dead, therefore any other man may be. Like another Samson, He has come forth from the prison-house, with the bars and gates upon His mighty shoulders, and has carried them away up there to the hill-top where He is. And the

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prison-house door stands gaping wide, and none so weak but he can pass out through the ever open portals. Christ has risen, and therefore if we will trust Him we have conquered that last and grimmest foe. Lastly, we have grace and peace from the King of kings. Does He rule by force? Does He rule by outward means? No I By terror?

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## Chapter 3 : The Epistles of Our Lord the Seven Churches of Asia

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The Era of Waning Love Smyrna: The Period of Suffering and Martyrdom Pergamos: The Epoch of State Religion Thyatira: The Church of the Middle Ages Sardis: The Reformation Period Philadelphia: The Era of Brotherly Love Laodicea: The Period of Lukewarmness The Laodicean Disease and Remedy The Rebuke of Love Bibliography The messages to the seven churches in the second and third chapters of Revelation have ever been a fruitful source for devotional study. The prophetic application of the churches to the seven periods of the Christian church is set forth with new interest and vigor. This reprint edition is the result of a scan of the original. Effort has been made to correct all typesetting errors resulting from scanning. FOREWORD With the exception of the four Gospels, the books of the New Testament were written in the form of epistles, or letters, to individuals, to local churches, or to the apostolic church as a whole. Paul wrote nine epistles to seven local churches and three to two of his companions in labor, but no person has any difficulty whatever in applying their revealed truths to his own heart and life down here in the twentieth century. The same is true of the epistles of Peter and John. One of the books of the New Testament bears the name of Jesus Christ as its author. It is prefaced with seven epistles addressed to seven of the many churches of Asia Minor. Should not reason and logic place this book and these epistles of Jesus on the same basis as all the others of the New Testament, giving them a universal as well as a local application? For this we should thank God and take courage. The motto of the godly Bengel is especially appropriate in our attitude toward the last book of the Bible: It therefore concludes and crowns the canon of Scripture. This last book of the Bible is the final revelation, which crowns the Scriptures with a crown of glory and seals divine inspiration with the seal of the living God. Not only is the Revelation one of the most brilliant gems among the sacred writings, but it is the crown jewel. Wordsworth, Lectures on the Apocalypse. Not only does the Revelation complete and crown the Biblical canon, but it is also the summary of the entire Bible. It has therefore been appropriately called a mosaic of the rest of Scripture. Almost everything in the Apocalypse can be traced to some other part of the Bible. Of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, twenty-six are directly quoted from in the Revelation, and of the four hundred and four verses in this last book, two hundred and seventy-eight are either quoted from or colored by Old Testament passages. The first five chapters contain twenty-seven, fifteen, thirteen, sixteen, and fourteen references respectively to various books of the Old Testament. Thus it is proved to be an essential part of the whole gospel design. Then, too, the rays of divine light emanating from every other part of the Bible focus upon this final installment of revealed truth. The Epilogue Genesis is the prologue of the Bible and the Revelation is the epilogue. It is the epilogue of divine revelation, in which the principal topics are recapitulated in order to emphasize their importance. The Bible would be as incomplete without the Revelation as without Genesis. The first two chapters of Genesis describe the Paradise that was lost through sin, and the last two chapters of the Revelation picture the Paradise that will be restored when sin and sinners are no more. Between these two perfect states is the long dark night of sin. Here they come to a glorious climax. Speaking of this purpose of the Revelation, one writer said: It contains the instruction most needed by the church in the last days of the reign of sin. This is the chief reason that it sums up the entire Scriptures and is the epilogue of revealed truth. All the prophecies and revelations of the book climax in the return of our Lord. The book therefore demands our careful study at this time. Although this last book is divinely called a revelation, it is also declared to be a prophecy. It is the recording of events before they come to pass. This last book foretells the events and condition of the last days in order that the remnant people of God may be safely guided through the perils of the crisis years of human history. Of the sixty-six books of the Bible, no other begins and ends with such a promise to the reader, hearers, and doers. We may justly claim this beatitude as in this treatise we pursue our way through a portion of the Revelation. This constitutes a divine endorsement of the book as a whole as well as an incentive to study and a promise that it can be understood. The church will

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never know the great loss sustained by neglecting its study. The Author intended that His book should be read publicly to the churches to which it was sent. Only a few copies of the Scriptures were available, and they were in the keeping of the religious leaders. This custom continued till the invention of printing placed the Scriptures in the hands of the people in their own tongues. The Bible is now in practically every home. The promised blessing must also include private reading and study in these days when the art of printing has placed the book within reach of every individual. The present neglect of the Revelation by ministers in their private study and public preaching is doubtless largely responsible for the small amount of reading and study devoted to it by the laity. The promised blessing is unconditional to all who read and hear and are willing to obey the instruction as fast as it is revealed and understood. Strict obedience to the light revealed is an important condition to receiving the blessing. This is true of all the Scriptures. One of the authors of Pulpit Commentary tells what is meant by keeping the things revealed: No other book of the Bible contains such a malediction on those who treat it unfairly. This indicates that the book contains no nonessentials that need to be eliminated, and that it is too complete and perfect to be improved by the process of addition or subtraction. In divine revelation there is no room for improvement. The malediction also includes those who exalt their own opinions above divine truth, or who change the meaning to suit their own interpretation or convenience. When we attempt to add to what God has said, He adds to us the curse. If we attempt to subtract from His Word, He subtracts from us the blessing. In view of the way the Apocalypse has been neglected and mistreated, the warning is indeed timely. Commenting on the threatened curse, The Cambridge Bible says: The curse, if understood in the latter sense, has been remarkably ineffective, for the common text of this book is more corrupt, and the true text oftener doubtful, than in any other part of the N. It is certain that the curse is designed to guard the integrity of this Book of the Revelation. John the Divine, p. Even though the Revelation, like all scripture, had its origin with God the Father, the Author and Fountain of all truth, and was given to man through the Son, who is the spokesman of the Godhead and the only Mediator between God and man, the human instrument or writer was John. There has been some dispute as to whether this refers to John the apostle or to some other John, but the weight of authority is in favor of the former. The writer not only took it for granted that his readers would identify him as the only John among the disciples of Jesus, but he also declared that he had before borne witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It would seem so. He identifies himself as the John who had written the account of the life and teachings of Christ. A careful examination will prove that the Gospel, the epistles of John, and the Revelation were written by the same author. Robertson Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. Trench asks the question: The earliest Christian writers indicate that the church of early postapostolic days never questioned that John the apostle was the author of the Apocalypse. Justin Martyr, in the early part of the second century, testified that John the apostle was the author. Eusebius, Irenaeus, Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Hippolytus, and Victorinus, the latter being the author of the oldest extant commentary on the Revelation, and all living between the middle of the second and the beginning of the fourth century, unanimously testify that John the apostle was the writer of this last book of the Bible. Date Written There is likewise a difference of opinion regarding the date of the writing of the Revelation. Some place the date during the reign and persecutions of Nero in A. The weight of authority is in favor of the latter date. There, therefore, he saw the Apocalypse. Eusebius, speaking of the fourteenth year of the reign of Domitian, declared that John was banished in that year to Patmos, where he had his visions, and Jerome, one of the most learned of the early writers, bore testimony to the same fact. Further evidence that John was not banished during the reign of Nero is that the persecutions of that emperor did not extend beyond the city of Rome. According to Tacitus Annals, book 15, chap. Domitian, who reigned from A. John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil; but the Lord preserved the life of His faithful servant, even as He preserved the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace. White, Acts of the Apostles, pp. At that time Christianity was outlawed as a form of treason against the Roman gods. Satan never persecutes his own citizens, nor does he afflict cold or lukewarm church members. It was the godliness of the early Christians that brought on them the wrath of the great adversary. This explains why persecution is largely unknown to the modern church. This fact is set forth

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by a well-known Christian writer: The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled. Christ prophesied that persecution would be the fate of His followers, including His immediate disciples. This prediction was literally fulfilled. The ten pagan Roman persecutions of the early church were terrible beyond description, but during that period Christianity made its greatest progress.

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### Chapter 4 : Revelation 2, 3: are the epistles of Jesus to the seven churches relevant to us?

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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. IT has generally been believed that the seven churches to whom the angel instructed John to write, were seven different and distinct churches in Asia, and by almost all of our commentators at the present day are understood to mean seven literal churches. But your speaker is forced, from the reasons which will hereafter be produced, to believe that these seven churches of Asia are to be understood in a figurative sense, alluding to seven periods of the church militant, during the Christian dispensation, down to the first resurrection, and the commencing of the glorious reign of Christ on the earth, commonly called The Millennium. If this view of the subject should prove to be the correct exposition of the text, how important and interesting is the subject to us who live in the last stage of the church! Then we who live at this day, are particularly, and solemnly and awfully, admonished in what is said by Christ to the church of the Laodiceans, that church corresponding with our stage of the church immediately previous to the commencing of the millennial glory; and how necessary that we should know that these admonitions do most deeply concern us! This view of the subject will then claim our first attention. Were the seven churches used as a figure of the whole Christian dispensation, or were they not? I answer, In my humble opinion, they were. Because, first, the book of Revelation does evidently contain a prophecy of things which did not concern those seven literal churches in Asia; for those churches have long since passed away and become extinct; yet the book of Revelation contains prophecies which are daily fulfilling, and have been for eighteen centuries. It is also said to be a revelation of things which must shortly come to pass. Yet if Christ is only giving admonitory advice to those seven literal churches, then he is only relating their characters as they then were, and so far as these churches were concerned it would cease to be a prophecy, and the very first verse in Revelation would be violated. Again, 3d verse, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand. All these are used in Revelation and apply to or concerning the whole Gospel period. If, then, the number seven is used so often in this book in a figurative sense, may we not reasonably suppose that it is so used in the dedication of this book to the seven churches in Asia, and the history of those seven churches be prophetic? I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Surely there were other churches of equal importance at that day. Our text shows that the seven churches were to be understood in a figurative or mystical sense. And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which were upon the top thereof. If this is true, then it readily follows that the seven churches of Asia are only used as a figure representing the church "through the whole earth. And I will now show that these comprehended the whole church through the whole earth. Some may inquire, "Why were those seven churches in Asia used as figures to represent the church militant in her several conditions to the end of her militant state? I shall now endeavor to take up the churches in the order in which they are laid down to us in Revelation. Yes, my brethren, these were desirable times surely. This church is addressed by the character "that holdeth the seven stars," the ministers and servants of him who holdeth them "in his right hand," under his immediate care and control, "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," and has said, where two or three are gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them, and has promised that whatsoever they should ask in his name it should be granted unto them. He says, "I know thy works. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. For

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Paul says, 2 Cor. And again the apostle says to Timothy, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience. How many "covetous" would hide their faces! How many "idolaters" would bow their heads, or "railers" would begin to murmur at the plainness of the speaker! How many "drunkards" would not have staggered into this house! And how many "extortioners" would have staid at home! O God, thou knowest. Simon Magus, after he was professedly a disciple of Christ, was found out by Peter to be in the "gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. Also Philetus, Demas, and Alexander the coppersmith, were all found to be liars, and many others who went out from them, as the apostle says, because they were not of them. And how many are there now, my brethren, among us, who, when tribulation cometh, will be offended, and go out from us! Lord, is it I? We had rather be called Rabbi, Rev. If we do not contend earnestly for our sect, they will decrease, and we shall come to nought. And I say, May God speed it; so that you all may fall on the word of God, and rally again under the name of Jesus. But we will proceed with our subject. Did the apostolic church, in its purity, so soon depart from the first principles of the gospel? Yes, in Acts xv. I pray God lay not this sin to their charge. And now, my brethren, how is it with us? Are we built on the truth? Have we a "Thus saith the Lord," for all we believe and do? Are we built on "the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone"? Verse 5, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove the candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. He also gives them notice, that, except they repent, he will remove the "desirable" state of the church into the next, which would be a state of trial, persecution, and poverty. No, it could not be proper, neither would it have been, as it is so used in every epistle through the whole seven, had not Christ designed it for all the churches in a certain age. There is also an admonition contained in these last-quoted words, to read, hear, and observe the prophecy now given by the Spirit to John, the inspired servant of Christ; and for all the churches of the age spoken of, to be careful to apply to themselves the admonitions, designed by the Holy Spirit for their immediate benefit. Yes, and, more than all, he has overcome and entered within the veil, as a forerunner for us who believe. May we all, by faith, have a right to this tree of life, this paradise of God. I will now examine the prophecy to the second church, which I understand to commence about the close of the first century, and lasted about two hundred years, until the days of Constantine, A. And O, my brethren, could we learn wisdom, by what the church has already suffered in the days of our forefathers, we should be more humble, the more worldly peace and prosperity we enjoyed. For it is only in the midst of persecution and trial, that the church manifest great purity of doctrine of life. How well, then, might this age of the church be compared to myrrh, when she must have been separated from worldly honors, avarice, pride, popularity, and hypocrisy, when the hypocrite and worldling had not motives to unite with and destroy the union of the brotherhood, and when the hireling shepherd could expect no fleece, that would suit his cupidity, to filch from the lambs of Christ! It is no less than the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. For charity can suffer long in tribulation, and the spirit of Christ will make us forsake all for his sake, and endure poverty for the name of Jesus. In these ten persecutions of the Roman government, in the text called ten days, we learn by the history of those days the church suffered a great diminution in numbers by apostasy and fear; yet those that remained steadfast made up in graces what they lost in numbers; and it was truly a time of trial, for many were cast into prison, and many suffered torture and death, rather than to offer sacrifices to their Pagan gods. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death. And in this passage we are again commanded to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches--all, all who have ears; not the branch in Smyrna only, but all who have ears. We have long been in the habit of giving away Scripture to others when it belongs to us and our children; let us therefore apply it home. During this age the church became very earthy, having her worldly policy, and, like the church in the present day, attending more to the outward concerns, and the worldly part of religion, than to inward piety and graces of the spirit, looking more for forms and ceremonies, than for the life, power, and spirit of the religion of Jesus, spending much of their time in building elegant chapels, gorgeous temples, high places to educate their ministry, and adorning them with pictures and pleasant things, and filling the hearts of their worshippers with high, popular,

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and haughty notions. Yes, my brethren, the age of trial was gone; the holy and secret aspirations of piety fled away, and, now she had obtained an earthly emperor, her divine Master was forgotten. And here was the falling away mentioned by Paul, 2 Thess. The Psalmist says, cxlix. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people. And John saw, Rev. The church, in this age, became immediately connected with this power called Satan, which is the devil, Pagan Rome. And, for myself, I see no reason to reject this explanation of the word Antipas in this text, as the history of those times are perfectly silent respecting such an individual as is here named. Yet many, who opposed the worship of saints and pictures, and the infallibility of the bishop of Rome, were excommunicated, persecuted, and finally driven out from among men, and in the next age of the church had to flee into the wilderness. All this happened in the kingdom of Rome, "where Satan dwelleth. Here, then, we see the rise of Papacy on the downfall of Pagan Rome. Whosoever will take the pains of comparing the Pagan manner of worship, forms, and ceremonies with Papacy, cannot help being forcibly struck with the similarity of the two. One deified their departed heroes and poets, the other her departed saints and votaries. The one consulted her oracles and priests for laws and instructions, the other her Popes and cardinals. The one had her altars, images, and statues, the other her chapels, pictures, and crosses. Both had them erected in every public place, for the multitude to fall before and worship. Both had their holy fire, holy water, and both claimed to perform miracles; the one by the response of her wooden oracles, and the other by her carnal priesthood. Here, then, we see how the church, in the fourth and fifth century, was led over the stumbling-block of Paganism, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. See the church history, and our former observations. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. This church lasted until about the tenth century; and little of her history is known to the world; but some authors have pretended to trace her into the north-west part of Asia, and in the north-east part of Europe, where they lived until about the tenth century, unknown unto the rest of the world, or taking but little concern with the nations around them. Yet it is said they retained religion in its purity, and held to the doctrines of the word of God. At any rate this church is represented as being in a state of heavy trial, and subject to seduction by some power represented by that woman Jezebel, of which I shall speak in its place. They, in charity, too, had many of their brethren to sustain while combatting these errors against the power of this beast. They did much service in holding up the hands of their pious teachers and pastors who were not led away by this wicked one. How much faith, too, must they have been in possession of to have withstood the power of their councils, the excommunications of the Pope, and a majority of their brethren who had fell into Papal errors! But these things were so, according to the best account we can obtain of those times. A more striking figure could not have been used to describe the Papal abomination. See 1 Kings xviii. It is very evident from history, as well as from this verse in Revelation, that the church of Christ did suffer some of the Papal monks to preach and teach among them. See the history of the Waldenses. For Paul says, "Whom he shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. And I will give him the morning star. And this proves another important point in which many good and pious people are greatly mistaken, viz.

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### Chapter 5 : Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia. - Christian Classics Ethereal Library

*"John to the seven Churches 1 1 Lest any should charge me with a in all descriptions of our Lord's second Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia.*

For the things in which the Sardians gloried the most, see Tacitus, Annal. He is indeed the Spirit of the Father and the Son. Immo quantus Dens est, qui dat Deum? To him and to his people, sunken in spiritual deadness and torpor, the lamp of faith waning and almost extinguished in their hearts, the Lord presents Himself as one having the fulness of all spiritual gifts; able therefore to revive, able to recover, able to bring back from the very gates of spiritual death, those who would employ the little last remaining strength which they still retained, in calling, even when thus in extremis, upon Him. Of course the locus classicus on this matter is Ephes. They need not fear to be left destitute of his manifold gifts, for his is the Holy Spirit in all his sevenfold operations, with which evermore to furnish them to the full. Hengstenberg considers the suggestion not improbable; it appears to me exceedingly improbable and far-fetched. The fact that Sardis should have had this name and fame of life is very startling, and may well summon each and all to an earnest heart-searching. There would have been nothing nearly so startling, if Sardis had been counted by the Churches round about as a Church fallen into lethargy and death. But nothing of the kind. Laodicea, we know, deceived herself iii. We gather from these words that, with few exceptions, the entire Sardian Church shared in this deadness of its chief pastor; while he, in seeking to revive their life, to chafe their dead limbs, would best revive and recover the warmth of his own Ps. Their present abject and fallen condition is excellently expressed by the use of the neuter; cf. The dead can bury their dead; but this is all which they can do; they must be themselves alive, who are bidden to impart a savour of life to others. It is a very instructive fact, that every where else, in the Epistles to all the Churches save only to this and to Laodicea, there is mention of some burden to be borne, of a conflict either with foes within the Church or without, or with both. Only in these two nothing of the kind occurs. The exceptions are very significant. There is no need to assume that the Church at Sardis had openly coalesced and joined hands with the heathen world; this would in those days have been impossible; nor yet that it had renounced the appearance of opposition to the world. But the two tacitly understood one another. There was nothing in it to provoke from the heathen, in the midst of whom it sojourned, any such words as those which the author of The Wisdom of Solomon puts into the mouth of the ungodly men ii. The world could endure it, because it too was a world. On the not less significant absence of all heretical opposition in these Churches, there will be something to say when we deal with the Epistle to Laodicea. But the charge against Sardis is not a perverse holding of untruth, but a heartless holding of the truth; and therefore I cannot but think that the Lord is graciously reminding her of the heartiness, the zeal, the love with which she received this truth at the first. There was great joy in that city, no doubt, then; but now all was changed. Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 Ep. And remembering all this, let them not guiltily let that go, which came so commended to them, which was so joyfully embraced by them, but rather hold it with a firm grasp. The grand Greek proverb, which affirmed that the feet of the avenging deities were shod with wool, awfully expressed the sense which the heathen had of this noiseless approach of the divine judgments, of their possible nearness at the moment when they were supposed the furthest off. The Angel of Sardis had a name that he lived, and was dead; but there were some there, however few, whose names were more than names; who had not merely the form of godliness 2 Tim. It is very beautiful to observe the gracious manner in which the Lord recognizes and sets his seal of allowance to the good which any where He finds. He, the same who delivered Noah, a preacher of righteousness, from the destruction of the old world, who drew just Lot out of Sodom, who could single out from the whole wicked family of Jeroboam, and take from the evil to come, Ahijah, for some good thing toward the Lord his God which was found in him 1 Kings xiv. That keeping itself, for nothing that defileth entereth the place where it is worn Rev. This, itself a wedding garment Matt. But, in a secondary sense, and as compared with too many others, there are those who have not defiled these garments; the phrase is equivalent

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to St. These are they who, if they do contract any defilement upon these, yet suffer it not to harden or become ingrained there; but go at once to the fountain open for all uncleanness, wash their garments and make them white again in the blood of the Lamb Rev. But a Latin pun in the Apocalypse! A deep sense of the significance of words and names will often find its utterance in such; but a Latin pun, and that without the slightest hint to set any looking for it, is about the unlikeliest thing in the world to encounter there. Not a few expositors, bringing this passage into connexion with Jude 23, find reference in both to those ceremonial uncleannesses spoken of Lev. The promise of life, for only the living walk, the dead are still; of liberty, for the free walk, and not the fast bound. And such they shall have. They shall walk cf. They who have kept their garments here, as a few in Sardis to whom the Lord bears testimony ver. Of white as the colour of heaven, and of white garments as shining ones, there has been already occasion to speak; see p. Add the words of Grotius: The same, out of a deep inborn symbolism, repeats itself in heathen antiquity as well; thus see Plato, Legg. I have alluded already, see p. One or two such passages we might attribute to accident; but they seem to me to occur too often for any such explanation. See a very good article by Planck, Lucian und das Christenthum, in the Theoll. If this passage had stood by itself, it would not have been hard for them to answer, as indeed they do answer, that all who are written in the book of life overcome; therefore this promise holds good for them all, and none who are there written have their names blotted out from thence. But, unhappily, beside and behind this passage, there are others not capable of this solution, and principally Exod. *Isti ergo quomodo inde delentur, ubi nunquam scripti sunt? Hoc dictum est secundum spem ipsorum, quia ibi se scriptos putabunt. Et ipsis constet non illos ibi esse.* Nor will it be inopportune to observe further what signal internal evidence this same fact, analysed a little closer, will supply on another point; upon this, namely, that these Epistles are what they profess themselves to be, namely Epistles, directly, and in their form no less than their substance, from Christ the Lord. With no unworthy thought about their inspiration, we might very easily come to regard them as having past through the mind of St. John, and having been recast, in their form at least, in the passage. What they would have been, if they had undergone any such modifying process as this, St. But no; it is the Lord Himself who speaks throughout; who not merely suggests the thoughts, but dictates the words. John is here merely his mouthpiece, that the Master is speaking and not the servant, is, I say, remarkably witnessed for in the fact of the numerous points of contact and coincidence between these seven Epistles and the words of Christ as recorded in the Gospels, in the three synoptic Gospels above all. Had such only been found in St. But it is mainly the other Gospels which furnish these. Thus in this Sardian Epistle alone, where, it is true, the points of resemblance are more numerous than any where else, spiritual activity is set forth as a watching, ver. He speaks here of blotting out a name from the book of life ver.

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### Chapter 6 : Full text of "The epistles of our Lord to the seven churches of Asia [microform]"

*I. HE Person of our Lord as here described Our Lord here assumes a title which declares his right to address authoritatively all the seven churches. It is He who is the Upholder and Governor of the churches who is about to.*

Flourishing churches were planted all around, far beyond the line of the visible horizon. He who in his former years had witnessed the whole Church of Christ contained in one upper-room in Jerusalem, had lived to see its line gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world. In that wide sweep—that supposed panoramic prospect, there was one cluster of Christian congregations, which, above all the rest, was peculiarly dear to the Exile, that is, the Churches of Asia. Not the Asia we are accustomed to think of, in its wide geographical acceptance; not even the Asia Minor—the peninsula equally familiar to us under the sway of modern Turkey, which embraces a continent in itself; but a comparatively limited district or province along her western coast line, and of which Ephesus formed the recognized capital. We are not to understand that seven exhausted the number of congregations of the faithful planted in that region; for, independent of other testimony, we have reliable information from the Epistles of Ignatius that at least two additional cities, larger than some of those mentioned, had Churches in their midst. The number seven was evidently again employed as the type of completeness—that same symbol which we have already had occasion to note in regard to the description of the Holy Spirit in His manifold operations—"The seven spirits which are before the throne"—the symbol which we shall meet in other significant figurations in subsequent portions of the Book. For example, the Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes; the seven burning lamps before the throne; or, in the outpourings of Divine judgments, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven vials. This symbolic number further betokens, that the epistolary addresses were designed as a directory of perpetual obligation for the whole universal Church, of all ages and all climates—European as well as Asiatic. The internal condition of these congregations, as unfolded in the varying language employed, reflects, as in a mirror, the mixed and conflicting aspects and elements which attach in all periods of her history to the Church-militant. They are, if it may be so expressed, outlines, filled in with their own appropriate details, but in bold outline depicting the ever-varying and diversified features in church life and character—the admixture of wheat with tares, truth with error, zeal with coldness, fidelity with unfaithfulness, light with darkness, life with death. There is Ephesus, bold in resolute endurance, discerning, intolerant of departures from the faith, and of all tampering with heathen libertinism—yet this coupled with lamentable declension from first love. There is Smyrna, battling nobly with tribulation and danger in the midst of poverty and suffering—rich in faith and good works. There is Pergamos, environed with satanic influences in varied forms and phases—the seat of hostile Jews clinging to the beggarly elements—the professing members of her Christian Church polluted with the defiling doctrines of Antinomianism—yet the band of faithful and true-hearted holding fast the true Name in the face of persecution and martyrdom. There is Thyatira, amid charities and zeal and all outward activities, endangered by the seductions of false teachers, those who would set up sensuous and sensual worship, deifying material forms, and encouraging immoral practice. There is Sardis, with its few noble exceptions, yet, as a Church, careless, unwatchful, formal, joined to its idols, dying while it lives of spiritual sloth and blandness. There is Philadelphia, with its little strength in the midst of fierce temptations, but keeping resolutely the word with patience, repressing the spirit of evil, strong and loving in its very weakness. There is Laodicea, distinguished for its worldly riches, its high-toned profession and spiritual pride; yet lowest in the scale and standard of all, with its perilous lukewarmness, neither cold nor hot—a religion of boasting words, but devoid of vitality and moral strength—"poor, blind, and naked. And hence these seven written messages may be regarded as a charge addressed by the Shepherd and Bishop of souls, through seven representative congregations, to His great diocese of Universal Christendom. There is a word of solemn warning and admonition to all, against the sins of pride and worldliness; formalism and self-sufficiency; doctrinal and heart apostasy; compromise with error; laxity of life. There is a word of gracious encouragement to the lowly, the

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suffering, the patient, the faithful, the duty-doing, the good and the true; especially when alive to their spiritual weakness and insufficiency. And more solemnizing is the lesson they further convey, that He who spoke so familiarly to John of these seven congregations in that early age, is, with the same searching scrutiny, in the midst of all His congregations and churches to this hour, noting with His eyes of flaming fire their faults and errors; their neglects and failures; their sinful departures from truth; their tamperings with error; their declensions and shortcomings. But ready, too when He sees their weak faith requires it, with His encouragements and approval—His promises and support; His sympathy and love; and the last more than the first. In a word, these Epistles contain a stereotyped message for all time—as much for us in Britain as for the Orientals of the first century. Nor is it at all necessary that we should regard the seven Churches, as some writers have done, as representatives of successive epochs or chronological eras of the Christian faith—describing the evolution of the church-life of future Christendom; as if they resembled the rainbow, the seven-colored arc of heaven, spanning the centuries from the earthly ministry of our Lord to His second coming—depicting the Ephesian age, the Sardis age, the Laodicean age, and others. We are abundantly warranted, therefore, rather in asserting that these seven Churches, by a sort of complex unity and symbolism, embrace all periods as well as all characteristics. The lessons embodied in their Epistles are limited to no age or circumstances. In common with every other portion of Scripture, they are "written for our admonition. Mysterious, doubtless, at the time to him and to others, was the Providence which divorced him from the scene of his active labors—his ministries of apostolic love, and condemned him to silence and inaction in the sea-girt isle. But his pen was to achieve more lasting good than all his sermons and spoken utterances. The things which had happened unto him had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel. His own tongue, with its fervid accents, was for the time silent, and his bereaved flock would mourn the cruel separation. But the place of his exile is to be consecrated as a temple for mankind—lonely Patmos is to become a spiritual oasis! The Church throughout all the world is to enjoy the compensating blessing to its last era, in these letters of surpassing faithfulness and comfort, and these visions of surpassing glory. He is shown that there are other ways of glorifying the name and promoting the cause of the Great Master he served, than by an answer to the prayer, "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. By these, there are often gracious ends to be subserved, which at the time are indiscernible. The tongue of the mute has been caused to sing—the parched ground has become a pool, and the dry land springs of water. They are cast in a similar mold and have a harmony and congruity of parts, which it may be well briefly to notice. They are all addressed to "the Angel" of the respective Churches—the recognized representative or messenger of each congregation. It was a name or term probably borrowed from the presiding functionary, the minister or president, of the Jewish Synagogue. Each letter begins with "These things says He. Each Epistle further begins with the impressive, solemnizing formula of the Divine omniscience—"I know your works. Each address ends with a phrase concerning conflict and victory, and a promise "to him who overcomes. The address to each Church is wound up with the solemn exhortation, or refrain, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches"—a sacred reminder, that although it is Christ who walks in the midst of the Candlesticks, and Christ who indites those Epistles to His servant John, He does not supersede the office of that Divine Agent of whom He had aforetime said, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. Perhaps He purposely left out the larger congregations, and inserted the Epistle to the comparative handful of believers at the almost unknown Thyatira, in order to give the assurance to all faithful associations of Christian men, limited in number and resources—battling it may be for dear life, that it is not numerical strength or social position, or local influence and importance, which are required to ensure His cognizance and care. The few names in Sardis—the little strength of Philadelphia—the hundreds in Thyatira—as well as the thousands in the teeming marts of Ephesus; the Church among the Valleys of Piedmont; the missionary settlements of the lowly and unlettered Moravians; the grain of mustard-seed, wherever it has fallen—each is tended, and watched, and nurtured by the Great Husbandman with patient and discriminating regard. The sublime contrast is alike true and comforting concerning Churches as concerning

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individuals: I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. How soon, in their case, did the golden age degenerate into the brass and the iron! May we not well take home the lessons from their extinguished light and vanished glories? But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory, both now and forever.

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## Chapter 7 : THE SEVEN EPISTLES

*The remarkable reappearance in this and in all these Epistles of the words so often on our Lord's lips, Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia.*

This is part of the book: After the gospels and with the exception of some very small passages in Acts and the epistles, it is in Revelation where we find Jesus speaking again in the first person. Chapters 2 and 3 contain letters that were sent to seven churches in Minor Asia. Jesus directly dictated these letters to the apostle John, commanding him to write them down, and send them to these churches, together with the whole book. It is surprising however how little attention these epistles of Jesus receive. Similar to the theory that essentially puts aside the gospels by classifying them as not relevant to us, one theory put forward is that these epistles of Jesus, together with the book of Revelation as a whole, do not really refer to us. Instead they refer "according to this theory - to some future believers and they are going to understand the book of Revelation, implicitly meaning that we can safely ignore this book or consider it as something "just for our information". Concerning the seven churches, these are, so the theory goes, future churches and to them these letters refer. However, these churches were real churches when John wrote the letters, exactly as there was a real church in Corinth to which Paul addressed his letter. Truly, the whole argument of these epistles not really referring to believers living under the age of grace breaks down if we see what Jesus Himself ordered John to do with the message he was about to receive. This is given in no unclear terms in Revelation 1: He wrote it and sent it right away to the seven churches mentioned. Therefore, the letters of Jesus to these churches refer to Christian believers in these churches and they are as much relevant to us, as the letters of Paul sent for example to believers in the church of Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia etc. They see Jesus saying for example: "If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" Revelation 2: Therefore, ways have to be devised to avoid it as much as possible. And the way which many find is to consider these letters and Revelation in general as mainly referring to future believers that will be living in those days. The truth however is that they are as relevant to us as the epistles of the apostles: Going now to the epistles themselves, we see there that the way Jesus is looking at each church and the church is not a building but people is like a coach who cares about his athletes who are running a race or fighting a fight. So you will see that the feedback to these churches is different in each case. A couple of them are faring well. They should keep up like this. But the rest of them are having problems. The Lord does not tell them "you know it is OK.. I have paid the price so that you do not have to do anything. In four out of the seven churches He tells them "Repent", change course! In fact He does not tell them just "Repent" but "Repent or else.. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. But dear brothers the Bible shows us Jesus from various angles and one of them is in Revelation 1: The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. To go back to our original question: The answer is yes they do. All were supposed to be read and be acted upon by their respective listeners. Of course there are many other theories concerning the meaning of the book of Revelation, almost all of which are missing the relevancy of the epistles to the seven churches this is the focus of this appendix and they treat them not as real epistles addressed to real people in real churches but as something either metaphoric or past, with not present application, or future with also no present application.

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## Chapter 8 : THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

*THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA. VII.-LAODICEA. (Rev. ill. ) THE position of Laodicea, on the banks of the Lycus, within a short distance of Hierapolis and Colossce.*

At the time of John, the region refers to the peninsula known as Asia Minor: At the end of the first century the peninsula known as Asia Minor seems to have embraced six provinces, Asia, Bithynia including Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Lycia including Pamphylia. The Province of Asia had been created as far back as the year B. Paul taught at Ephesus for over two years at the school of Tyrannus Acts. It is probably for this reason, together with its prominence and location on the seacoast close to Patmos, that the first church John is told to address is at Ephesus Rev. The prominence of this church is reflected in its being the possible recipient of as many as eight NT books: Besides, Paul was ministering in Ephesus at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians. Peter mentions this principle: This may explain why the letters to the churches which appear in Rev. It is known that there were other churches in Asia Minor at the time John wrote. There were other churches in Asia at the close of the first century. The NT itself refers to congregations at Troas Acts. There might also have been churches at Magnesia and Tralles, since Ignatius wrote to them less than twenty years later. The answer to the first question would seem to be found in their geographical distribution which facilitated communication by letter along the established trade routes between the cities: Some at least of these cities had Christian communities before the end of the first century;. Moreover Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were in direct communication with one another by the great road which the Romans had constructed shortly after their occupation of Asia. So far then both the selection of the names and their order are easy to understand. But why should not the Apocalyptic messenger have been sent on from Pergamum to Cyzicus or to Troas? Why was his course at this point diverted to the inland towns of Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia,. Planted at these seven centres, the Apocalypse would spread through their neighbourhoods, and from thence to the rest of the province. It appears to be a deliberate choice, like the many other occurrences of seven in the book of Revelation, to signify that these seven churches typify all churches in every age. Each letter to an individual church is given for the benefit of all seven churches of the Revelation and all saints of every age: The historicity of these assemblies is not denied, but this view holds that the Lord chose to single them out because they represent seven kinds of problems that typify various congregations of believers. These seven Epistles, however primarily addressed to these seven Churches of Asia, were also written for the edification of the Universal Church; in the same way, that is, as St. The warnings, the incentives, the promises, the consolations, and, generally, the whole instruction in righteousness in these contained, are for every one in all times, so far as they may meet the several cases and conditions of men. Thus far there can be no question. The seven accepted letters of Ignatius, datable to about AD, are of great value to our study, for three of them were addressed to three of our seven churches, Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia, and a fourth to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. It is not clear whether Ignatius knew the Revelation. His impressions of the churches are independent. Their testimony regarding these facts is especially weighty since they were intimately familiar with the region and times of which John wrote. This word [ecclesia] translated church or assembly is found in at least four important meanings in the New Testament. It is used 1 to mean an assembly of people. In this sense it has no special theological meaning. It can refer to Israel as a gathered people in the wilderness Acts 7: Each assembly or church has a local gathering composed of professed Christians. That all in the assembly are not necessarily true believers is clear from the messages to the seven churches of Asia Rev. The same word is used 4 of the body of Christ, composed of those baptized by the Holy Spirit into the church 1Cor. Ecclesia used in this connection becomes a technical word referring to the saints of this age. It is not used in a technical sense to describe all those who are known to have been born againâ€”the true body of Christ Luke. The latter is the Body of Messiah, composed of all true believers since Pentecost. It is sometimes referred to as the Universal Church. But the visible church is the local body or local church, which may have both believers and

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unbelievers. It includes all professing believers whether they really are or not. It depicts absolute clearness of mental vision, which photographs all facts of life as they pass. Does he belong to a special class of Christians composed of those who are spiritual and not carnal? Or is he part of a special group of Christians who are set apart for eventual martyrdom? These promises describe the rewards for true believers within the larger body of each church, composed of both true and professing Christians. Almost all the references to overcoming mention a promise for all believers, promises that accompany salvation. It would seem strange to think of only some believers eating of the tree of life, or not being hurt by the second death, or not being clothed in white garments. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? John indicates that those who overcome do so by way of their relationship with God: I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. They inherit all things because of their position in Christ as sons of God Rev. Promises to the Overcomer.

### Chapter 9 : A Testimony of Jesus Christ : - Seven Churches of Asia

*THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.* A well-known commentator on the Apocalypse has graphically pictured the aged Evangelist ascending one of the rocky heights of Patmos, and from thence, as a center, beholding on every side, even at that early dawn of the Christian era, undoubted evidences of the spread of the Gospel.