



**The Age of The Apocalypse**  
**Hear What the Spirit Says unto the Churches #1**  
**Revelation 2:1-17**  
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The Bible says there will be seven stages of the “church age,” from the Day of Pentecost, when the Church began, to the Day of the Rapture, when the Church, the “Body of Christ,” will ascend into the heavens to meet the Lord in the air.

- Jesus told the Apostle John that those seven stages will be characterized by the seven churches listed in Revelation 2:1-3:22, and He dictated seven personal letters to those seven specific churches in Asia Minor.
- However, the Holy Spirit inspired them to be included in the written Word of God, and therefore they are applicable to:
- THE CHURCH of every age, EVERY LOCAL CHURCH of every age, as well as EVERY CHRISTIAN of every age, for each letter contains a standard by which one’s maturity in Christ can be measured.

**After every letter, John quoted Jesus as having said: “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”**

- However, by every measure, the contemporary churches have not even heard what the Spirit said to the churches, much less heeded what the Lord Jesus instructed the churches to do.
- The success of churches today is measured by the outward appearance of their buildings, the size of their attendance, how many people they baptize each year, and the various programs or ministries they have for every age group.
- While God may use those characteristics to draw the lost to be saved, according to these seven letters, they have nothing to do with the True Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is why the visible, institutional, organizational, and denominational churches are dying.
- According to every report available, the visible churches have become polluted by an over-organized bureaucracy in their leadership, and worldly in their methods of worship – i.e., the structure is there but there is no spiritual life within them.
- Many analysts agree that the traditional “building-centric” model of church is numerically unsustainable, as there aren’t enough of the younger age groups involved in the church today to replace those who have died or can no longer attend.
- The Lord Jesus is still walking within His Church today, grieving over what He sees in the lives of those for whom He suffered and died, and I pray that those believers who hear this message will heed what the Spirit of God is saying.

**The Church at Ephesus – The FALLEN church – Revelation 2:1-7.**

- Ephesus was a large metropolitan city of more than 200,000 people.
- The Temple of Diana, with its evil influence and activities kept the city in a festival atmosphere with vice and sexual corruption.
- Paul visited with Priscilla and Aquila and started a church in their home. Paul stayed there for two years and had great success in preaching until a riot broke out and he was forced to leave. (See Acts 19:23-41)
- Paul wrote his letter to the church at Ephesus, warning them to deepen their love for the Lord Jesus, but since Jesus dictated his letter to them some 40-years later, we can see that Paul’s warning was not heeded.
- While they had become very organized and legalized, they had become callous and indifferent in their love and devotion to the Lord.
- The Lord commended them for their duty, determination, and doctrinal purity, but He condemned them because they had left their first love for Him.
- In verse 5, the Lord counseled them to remember when they first fell in love with Him, repent of those things that had taken His place in their heart, and return to their first love for Him, or He would remove their candlestick.

## **The Church at Smyrna – The FEARFUL church – Revelation 2:8-11.**

- The Roman Emperor, Domitian, was the fiercest of all of the persecutors. He led the second great wave of severe persecution of Christians, and the church at Smyrna was the first church in his pathway.
- The Lord recognized their works and their tribulation; they had lost all of their possessions, and some had lost their lives. But the Lord counseled them to turn their fear into faith because a crown of faith awaited them at the Judgment Seat of Christ if they endured to the end.
- The Bible says five crowns will be given to the believer at the judgement seat of Christ for their faithful service.
- The Incorruptible Crown – 1 Corinthians 9:25
- The Crown of Rejoicing – 1 Thessalonians 2:19
- The Crown of Righteousness – 2 Timothy 4:8
- The Crown of Glory – 1 Peter 5:4
- The Crown of Life – James 1:12, Revelation 2:10 – which is also called “The Martyr’s Crown.”
- Historians tell us that the last line of verse 10 was inscribed on the walls of the catacombs of Rome, where those who were being martyred for their faith left a word of encouragement to those fellow martyrs who would follow.

## **The Church at Pergamos – The FALTERING church — Revelation 2:12-17.**

- Pergamos, or “Pergamum,” was known as a political center, and the church at Pergamum had two problems:
  - First, the synagogue of Satan, a Babylonian cult, had been moved into the city by decree, and its effect was being spread throughout the world. When Babylon fell to the Persians, the leader of the group moved the headquarters of Satan’s synagogue to Pergamum.
  - Second, when Constantine became Emperor of Rome in A.D. 312, he not only lifted the ban on Christians and stopped their persecution, he decreed that everyone should be baptized as a Christian. This church grew larger and more acceptable to man, but in doing so, it lost its purity and therefore, its testimony to the world. They allowed the doctrine of Balaam to enter into their church life, which was characterized by three things: The wisdom of the world, the worship of the world, and the wickedness of the world.

- Jesus counseled them to stop compromising with the world and to turn back to Him, or He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth.
  - First, there would be the hidden manna. “Manna” is a type of Jesus Christ, for He is the Bread of Life. Therefore, the one who would keep himself pure would be nourished on Christ, the Bread of Life, hidden to the multitudes for ages, but revealed to those who would put their trust and faith in Him as their Savior.
  - Secondly, a white stone, which refers to the purity of Jesus Christ who was the Stone cut without hands, and we will share in that purity.
  - Thirdly, a new name which no man can know except the one who receives it.

**Ephesus, the fallen church;  
Smyrna, the fearful church,  
and Pergamos, the faltering church.**

**Which one better represents THE church today,  
and which one is more like OUR Church Today?**