

# **“You’ve Got Mail!”**

## **The Seven Churches of Revelation**

### **Part 1 – Introduction / The Church of Ephesus**

There are at least three different ways of studying the letters to the seven churches of Asia, found in Revelation chapters two and three.

1. Simple admonitions to seven literal churches of John’s day.
2. Practical injunctions to churches in all ages until Christ’s return.
3. Seeing the seven churches as symbolizing the entire history of the church on earth, with each church describing an era of Christianity during the New Testament age.

This series will be based on the third and prophetic approach.

**In this approach, the seven churches represent these time periods:**

1. Ephesus – the early church age of the apostolic times.
2. Smyrna – the church age of great persecution (Rome / Coliseum, etc.).
3. Pergamos – the church united with the state (Rome / Constantine).
4. Thyatira – the rise of the Catholic (universal) Church.
5. Sardis – the Reformation age of the church / rise of Protestantism.
6. Philadelphia – the rise of Scripture and the church of clear testimony.
7. Laodicea – the self-satisfied / lukewarm church, with Christ outside.

**Commonalities in the letters to the churches:**

- A. Each letter contains a specific characteristic of Christ.
  - i. Revelation 2:1 / Revelation 2:8 / Revelation 2:12, etc.
- B. All the letters are addressed to “the angel of the church”. Most scholars believe this refers to the pastors of the churches (Rev. 1:19-20).
- C. Christ tells each of the churches “I know thy works”, and He goes on to give each church an exhortation on what they need to do.
- D. He makes a promise to every one of the churches – “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith” – “to him that overcometh”
- E. He commends every church but Laodicea. He condemns every church except Smyrna and Philadelphia. He says nothing negative to those two.

**I. The Church of Ephesus – Revelation 2:1-7**

A. This church age represents the apostolic age.

- i. The bulk of this church history would be dated from 70 AD – 170 AD.

B. This church was founded by Paul around 53-55 AD (Acts 19).

C. John was once the pastor of this church.

D. Their strengths

- i. Hard work
- ii. Patience
- iii. Discernment
- iv. Hated the works of the Nicolaitans

E. Their fault

- i. They “left” their first love.

F. Their remedy

- i. Remember and Repent (Revelation 2:5)

G. Their promise

- i. They would eat of the tree of life in the midst of heaven. \*Every church age had “overcomers” – those who are truly saved and will spend eternity forever with the Lord in Heaven (1 John 5:4-5).