



SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA

REVELATION CHAPTERS 2 & 3

INTRODUCTION PART B

REVELATION 1:19-20

V19 the key to the Book of Revelation

- ▶ “What thou hast seen.....” the vision
chapter 1
- ▶ “the things that are.....” the assemblies
chapters 2 & 3
- ▶ “the things that are to come” things to come after
the present time
chapters 4 onwards

v 19 “the things that are to come”

- ▶ From Revelation 4:1, the church (or the assemblies of chapters 2 and 3) is in heaven
- ▶ Therefore, the rest of the book describes things yet to come, leading on to judgements and afterwards the new heaven and new earth

V 20

7 stars

- ▶ Stars are heavenly
- ▶ They give light
- ▶ These are described as being the angels of the seven churches
- ▶ We might think of that which is spiritual in the assemblies, perhaps embodied in the “leaders” (Hebrews 13:17).

V 20 & candlesticks or light-bearers

- ▶ The candle-sticks or lamps are the seven assemblies.
- ▶ They are looked at as light-bearers, responsible for testimony on earth
- ▶ Only here in scripture are they looked at in this way
- ▶ Paul emphasises the oneness of the assembly eg 1 Corinthians 10:17, Ephesians 4:4
- ▶ This verse and chapters 2 and 3 do not contradict Paul's teachings; they look at what has been seen on earth, using the 7 examples

3 Ways to read chapters 2 and 3

- ▶ Historically existing assemblies at the time John was in Patmos (in then present conditions)
- ▶ Seven successive periods of church history (with special reference to Western Europe)
- ▶ Moral/practical lessons for church testimony today

Why “successive” periods?

- ▶ 1) Revelation is a prophetic book (1:3)
- ▶ 2) the things which are (1:19) are to be understood as being after John saw the vision but before the scene moves to heaven (4:1). Meanwhile the church is on earth.
- ▶ 3) these letters are included in this book – Revelation.

Why are there seven?

- ▶ After all, there were surely other assemblies in existence at the time – indeed, others in Asia (eg Colosse etc)
- ▶ The seven selected by the Holy Spirit were representative of the whole
- ▶ In scripture, seven stands for a complete whole

Why seven (continued)?

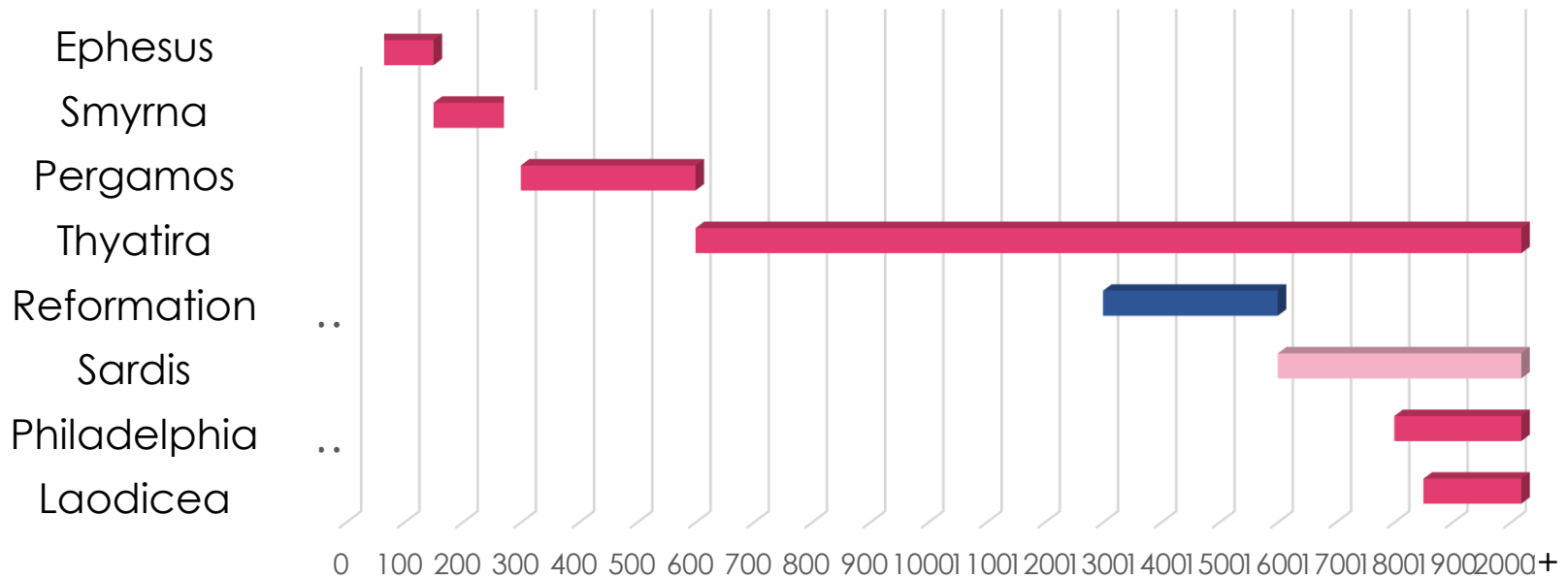
- ▶ In retrospect, we can discern seven distinct periods, or phases, of church history, fore-shadowed by the conditions seen in these seven letters
- ▶ The candlesticks, or light-bearers are seen as distinct entities here. This does not negate the truth that the church is “one body” – rather, it emphasises local responsibility for light-bearing, and shows the phases mentioned above

What are the seven time-periods?

- ▶ 1) Ephesus about 65 to 167 AD
- ▶ 2) Smyrna 167 to 313 AD
- ▶ 3) Pergamos 313 to 600 AD approx
- ▶ 4) Thyatira 600 AD to present time
- ▶ 5) Sardis 16th century to present
- ▶ 6) Philadelphia early 19th century to present
- ▶ 7) Laodicea late 19th century to present

Time periods

Ephesus	65	167					
Smyrna		167	313				
Pergamos			313	600 approx			
Thyatira				600	continuing until		present Time
Sardis					16 th century	Continuing until	Present Time
Philadelphia						early 19 th century	Present Time
Laodicea						late 19 th century	Present Time



History of the church (up to year 2000)

Structure of each letter

- ▶ Address “to the angel of.....”
- ▶ Sender in a character suited to each one
- ▶ Recognition of what can be commended
- ▶ Rebuke (where needed)
- ▶ Call to repent (if needed)
- ▶ Call to hear what the Spirit says
- ▶ Promise to the overcomer

Order of “call” and “promise”

- ▶ In the first three letters, the call to hear is addressed to ALL, followed by a word to the over-comer
- ▶ In the last four letters, the word to the over-comer precedes the call to hear which is addressed to ALL

Need to distinguish individuals from assemblies

- ▶ Each letter addresses what is typical of the testimony at each stage of the assembly's prophetic history.
- ▶ We need to recognise that in every stage there have been true believers, who have eternal life.
- ▶ Thus we see in Thyatira, for example, those who have not known the depths of Satan. They have been caught up in a wicked system, but the Lord lays no burden upon them in His dealings with them.

Some things to remember

- ▶ These seven letters are prophetic
- ▶ They are typical, and relate to stages in the history of the church's testimony
- ▶ They all have moral lessons for us today
- ▶ “Continuing” features are shown by 4 to 7
- ▶ There have been, and undoubtedly still are, true believers in wrong situations
- ▶ Each letter has words for those who have ears to hear