

## **DAY BY DAY**

Bible Texts and Topics, With Comments,  
For Personal Study and Use at Family Worship.

### **3.13: SEVEN CHURCHES**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." Revelation 1:10, 11.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number seven indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world.

"Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. He is in constant communication with His people. He knows their true state. . He observes their order, their piety, their devotion. Although He is high priest and mediator in the sanctuary above, yet He is represented as walking up and down in the midst of His churches on the earth. With untiring wakefulness and unremitting vigilance, He watches to see whether the light of any of His sentinels is burning dim or going out. If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the true watchman in the Lord's house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light.

"Christ is represented as holding the seven stars in His right hand. This assures us that no church faithful to its trust need fear coming to naught; for not a star that has the protection of Omnipotence can be plucked out of the hand of Christ." Acts of the Apostles, 585, 586.

"Who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." Revelation 2:1. This scripture shows Christ's relation to the churches. He walks in the midst of His churches throughout the length and breadth of the earth. He watches them with intense interest to see whether they are in such a condition spiritually that they can advance His kingdom. Christ is present in every assembly of the church. He is acquainted with every one connected with His service. He knows those whose hearts He can fill with the holy oil, that they may impart it to others. Those who faithfully carry forward the work of Christ in our world, representing in word and works the character of God, fulfilling the Lord's purpose for them, are in His sight very precious. Christ takes pleasure in them as a man takes pleasure in a well-kept garden and the fragrance of the flowers he has planted." Testimonies 6, 418, 419.

#### **2. EPHESUS**

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 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 thy candlestick out of his place, except

thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Revelation 2:1-7.

“The meaning of ‘Ephesus’ is ‘desirable’, and fitly describes the character and condition of the church in its first state, when its members received the doctrine of Christ in its purity, and enjoyed the benefits and blessings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This applies to the first century, or during the lifetime of the apostles.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 281.

“The church at Ephesus.... Jesus used as a symbol of the entire Christian church in the apostolic age.... At the first, the experience of the church at Ephesus was marked with childlike simplicity and fervor. . . . But after a time the zeal of the believers began to wane, and their love for God and for one another grew less. . . . In their desire for something novel and startling, they attempted to introduce new phases of doctrine, more pleasing to many minds, but not in harmony with the fundamental principles of the gospel. In their self-confidence and spiritual blindness they failed to discern that these sophistries would cause many to question the experiences of the past, and would thus lead to confusion and unbelief.

“As these false doctrines were urged, differences sprang up, and the eyes of many were turned from beholding Jesus as the author and finisher of their faith. . . . It was at this critical time in the history of the church that John was sentenced to banishment. Never had his voice been needed by the church as now. Nearly all his former associates in the ministry had suffered martyrdom. . . . But the Lord's hand was moving unseen in the darkness.” Acts of the Apostles, 578-581.

### **3. SMYRNA**

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” Revelation 2:8-11.

“The meaning of ‘Smyrna’ is ‘myrrh, or sweet-smelling savor’, and applies to the period of time when many of the saints of God suffered martyrdom under pagan Rome.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 281.

“Like God's servants of old, many were “tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Hebrews 11:35. These called to mind the words of their Master, that when persecuted for Christ's sake, they were to be exceeding glad, for great would be their reward in heaven; for so the prophets had been persecuted before them. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer for the truth, and songs of triumph ascended from the midst of crackling flames. Looking upward by faith, they saw Christ and angels leaning over the battlements of heaven, gazing upon them with the deepest interest, and regarding their steadfastness with approval. A voice came down to them from the throne of God, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Revelation 2:10.

“In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. The great controversy, in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives, did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread, and the number of its adherents to increase. It penetrated into regions that were inaccessible, even to the eagles of Rome. Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen

rulers who were urging forward the persecution: You may “kill us, torture us, condemn us .... Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent .... Nor does your cruelty . . . avail you.” It was but a stronger invitation to bring others to their persuasion. “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.” The Great Controversy, 41, 42.

#### **4. PERGAMOS AND THYATIRA**

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; 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.” Revelation 2:12-17.

“The meaning of ‘Pergamos’ is ‘height, or elevation’, and fitly represents that period of the Christian church, beginning with the reign of the emperor Constantine in 313 AD, when the power which had put the Christians to death espoused the cause of the church, and by rewards, edicts, and promised promotions to office in the government, sought to induce the people to become Christians, thus bringing a flood of worldiness and corruption into the church. Many of the heathen rites and ceremonies previously introduced into the Christian religion, including the heathen festival, Sunday (sun's day), were then established by law, resulting in the first day of the week taking the place of the Sabbath of the Bible.” Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 282.

“It was a period in which the true servants of God had to struggle against a spirit of worldly policy, pride, and popularity among the professed followers of Christ, and against the virulent workings of the mystery of iniquity, which finally resulted in the full development of the papal man of sin.” Daniel and the Revelation, 383, 384.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not.” I John 3: 1.

#### **THYATIRA:**

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter

shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelation 2:18-29.

"Thyatira' means 'song of labor', or 'sacrifice of contrition', and points out the condition of God's people during the long, dark period of 1260 years, beginning with the establishment of papal supremacy in 538 AD, and closing with the downfall of that power in 1798. During that time, millions of the saints of God were put to death in the most cruel manner that wicked men and demons could invent. Christ referred to this time in His wonderful prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, in these words: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." The tribulation of the 1260 years was cut short through the influence of the Reformation." Bible Readings for the Home Circle, 282.

## 5. SARDIS

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelation 3:1-6.

'Sardis' means 'song of joy', or 'that which remains'. A cause for joy at that time was the fact that the great tribulation of the people of God was at an end. It was only as a result of the Reformation that any of God's people were left remaining.

"The great fault found with this church is that it has a name to live, but is dead. And what a high position, in a worldly point of view, has the nominal church occupied during this period! Look at her high sounding titles, and her favor with the world. But how have pride and popularity grown apace, until spirituality is destroyed, the line of distinction between the church and the world is obliterated, and these different popular bodies are churches of Christ only in name!

"This church was to hear the proclamation of the doctrine of the Second Advent, as we learn from verse 3: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." This implies that the doctrine of the advent would be proclaimed, and the duty of watching be enjoined upon the church." Daniel and the Revelation, pages 392, 393.

"When the Savior pointed out to His followers the signs of His return, He foretold the state of backsliding that would exist just prior to His Second Advent. There would be, as in the days of Noah, the activity and stir of worldly business and pleasure - seeking, buying, selling, planting, building, marrying, and giving in marriage, with forgetfulness of God and the future life. For those living at this time, Christ's admonition is: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." "Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The Great Controversy, 309.

## 6. PHILADELPHIA

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Revelation 3:7-13.

‘Philadelphia’ means ‘brotherly love’, and applies to the church under the judgment-hour message.

“It expresses the position and spirit of those who received the advent message up to the autumn of 1844. As they came out of the sectarian churches, they left party names and party feelings behind; and every heart beat in union, as they gave the alarm to the churches and to the world, and pointed to the coming of the Son of man as the believer's true hope. Selfishness and covetousness were laid aside, and a spirit of consecration and sacrifice was cherished. The Spirit of God was with every true believer, and His praise upon every tongue. Those who were not in that movement know nothing of the deep searching of heart, consecration of all to God, peace, joy in the Holy Spirit, and pure, fervent love for one another, which true believers then enjoyed. Those who were in that movement are aware that language would fail to describe that holy, happy state.” Daniel and the Revelation, 395, 396.

"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith He that is holy, He that is true: He that hath the key of David; He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Since our Saviour is so powerful, why do you lean so heavily upon human beings? Why do you go to them for help and strength, pouring your troubles into their ears? Take your minds off human beings. They are finite, erring. We are only little children, in comparison with God. From Him, as little children, we must learn our lessons. He wants us to humble our hearts before Him, in submission and contrition. He wants us to speak kind, tender, compassionate words to one another. Educate yourselves to speak such words. Be polite to God and to one another. Remember that He wants you to have the best of manners, that you may glorify Him before the world. He desires you to live in unity with one another, and to love one another. Remember that if you love one another here, you will live with the redeemed through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Oh, think of these things! May God stir your hearts today as they never have been stirred before. May He lead you to heed the words, "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903.

## 7. LAODICEA

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou

mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelation 3:14-22.

Laodicea signifies the judging of the people. This church exists in the time of the judgment and the proclamation of the final warning messages preceding Christ's second coming. This is a time of great profession, with but little vital godliness and true piety. It is the last stage of the church. It applies to believers under the third message, the last message of mercy before the coming of Christ, while the great Day of Atonement is transpiring, and the investigative judgment is going forward upon the house of God.

"As a people, we are triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain Scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and the spirit of sacrifice. . . . Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins, while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for, or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment, that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every qualification necessary to perfect Christian character." Testimonies 3, 253, 254.

"When I see the work that lies before us, and when I see how poorly we comprehend what God requires of us, I am in an agony of distress. Here is the Word of God. Will you take it? Or will you be rejected by the Lord because, though professing much, your spirit and words and actions are void of the warmth of His Spirit? A lifeless profession is nauseating to God. Christ can not present before the Father those who are lukewarm. He declares: "So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"--Are you going to live so that, when Christ comes, you will be among the number of whom He says, "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"? May God awaken us, and break our hearts of stone, is my prayer. We need to feel His converting power. His praise should fill our hearts and lips. The fragrance of Christ's life is to be brought into our life. Then we can represent the great I AM. The Lord wants to work with us. He wants us to know just where we are standing." General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903.