

The Seven Churches: Summary

by Staff

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This series on Revelation 2-3 has shown from internal biblical evidence that the seven churches all exist in the end time. It has also agreed with our traditional understanding that the seven churches form a chronological chain stretching from the days of the apostles until today. The last of the seven, Laodicea, is the most prevalent right now.

But what happens next? As Christ spews us from His mouth for the sin of Laodiceanism, can we expect improvement in the days ahead? As the church falls down, stone by stone, do we have any hope for the future? In closing our study on this topic, we will examine what the Bible indicates will happen in the near future.

1. Does the Bible say how far this scattering will go? Matthew 24:1-2; Isaiah 5:1-15; 1:8-9; Ezekiel 5:1-4; Amos 5:3; Zechariah 11:1-14.

Comment: These scriptures show the stones of the Temple, spiritual houses, vineyards and flocks being scattered and destroyed. While it is impossible for us to fit the hundreds of organizations that comprise God's church into a specific Revelation 2-3 church, it should be clear that the seven churches cover all the basic attitudes of the groups and individuals of the entire church. Christ instructs all of them to hear and overcome.

2. The above passages suggest God will reduce the church (and in the Tribulation, Israel) to about one-tenth of its original size. What does He do with this tithe of His church? Haggai 1-2.

Comment: Haggai prophesies that God will stir up a remnant of His people to come together with Zerubbabel and Joshua to rebuild the Temple just before He shakes the earth for the final time. Some among them are old enough to compare the former Temple (the church during its Philadelphian heyday) to the latter Temple (Haggai 2:3), composed of the remnant of the churches.

3. Who are Zerubbabel and Joshua? Zechariah 3-4; Revelation 11; comparing Zechariah 4:14 to Revelation 11:4.

Comment: Revelation 11:4 interprets Zechariah 4:14, showing that Zerubbabel and Joshua are types of the Two Witnesses of Revelation 11. Notice in Zechariah 4:1-4, 11-12 that they feed all seven of the end-time churches (compare this with the seven lampstands or candlesticks in Revelation 1:12-20, which symbolize these same churches). This introduction of the Two Witnesses shows their main responsibilities to be building the latter Temple and providing "oil" for the churches (compare Matthew 25:1-13). Revelation 11:1-2 indicates they do not go to the world at all initially, but they first measure the church of God, its ministry and people. Later, during the Tribulation, they witness to the world.

4. How and where does this remnant come together? Isaiah 4:1-6; 41:19.

Comment: No single verse or passage dogmatically gives us the answer, but biblical imagery provides some hints. All seven women (churches) take hold of one man. The leader of the Two Witnesses, typed by Zerubbabel, seems to be the main one they clutch in desperation. This remnant church is motivated to join in the work of the Witnesses, whom God stirs to rebuild the spiritual Temple. Isaiah 41:19 shows seven major trees (churches) being planted in the wilderness, as compared to three major trees and shepherds being cut down in Zechariah 11:8. Within the context of Isaiah 40-45, Isaiah gives the same warnings and encouragements that Haggai does in Haggai 2:4-5: Be of good courage, fear not, work, etc.

5. Do these scriptures refer to the time before or during the Millennium? Same verses.

Comment: A primary rule of Bible study is not to lift a verse out of its context. Isaiah 4 continues the thought of chapter 3, God's judgment on His people. Verses 2-5 show Zion being made holy and protected, much like Israel in the wilderness. Isaiah 41 illustrates the same scenario, events that occur before the Millennium. God will prepare a table in the wilderness for His church, a place prepared for her with Millennial conditions. What will occur in the Millennium to the nations of Israel begins with the church in the wilderness, which gets a foretaste of what will soon become a worldwide phenomenon.

6. If the latter Temple of Haggai is only a remnant of the church, what happens to the rest? Zechariah 13:9; Luke 21:36; Revelation 2:22; 3:10, 18; 12:17.

Comment: When the remnant latter Temple under the leadership of Jesus Christ and the Two Witnesses goes to a Place of Safety, the rest of the church will be left behind, having been accounted unworthy to escape (Luke 21:36; Revelation 3:10). They must face the refining fire of tribulation. Perhaps they will face extreme persecution and martyrdom, but God's purpose is to purify them and restore their zeal and devotion to Him so that they will turn to Him with their whole hearts. Certainly, they are not lost, and if they overcome, they will enter God's Kingdom and experience the joy and glory of being members of God's Family!