



To present this subject in true context, it must be understood that the ‘angel’ of the churches discussed in Revelations 1-3 are in fact heavenly spirits and not the Presbyters or Bishops. To support this statement we present the following four authoritative statements.

Quotes!

THAYERS GREEK/ENGLISH LEXICON #32

Guardian angels of individuals are mentioned in Mt. 18:10; Acts 12:15.

The angels of the churches in Rev. 1:20; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14 **are not their Presbyters or Bishops, but heavenly spirits who exercise such a superintendence and guardianship over them that whatever in their assemblies is worthy of praise or of censure is counted to the praise or the blame of their angels also, as though the latter infused their spirit into the assemblies;** cf. De Wette, Dusterdieck, [Afford,] on Rev. 1:20, and Lucke, Einl. in d. Offendb. d. Johan. 2. p. 429 sq. ed. 2; [Bp. Lightfoot on Philip. p. 199 sq.].

ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA

In Rev. 1-3 we meet with the seven “Angels” of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. These are probably guardian angels, standing to the churches in the same relation that the “princes” in Daniel stand to the nations; practically the “angels” are personifications of the churches. **A less likely view is that the “angels” are the human representatives of the churches, the Bishops or chief Presbyters.** There seems, however, no parallel to such a use of “angel” and it is doubtful whether the monarchical government of churches was fully developed when the Apocalypse was written. P. 6, 11th Edition, Vol. 2.

VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS

ANGEL, a messenger.

. . . “Is also used of a guardian or representative in Rev. 1:20, compare Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:15 (where it is better understood as = ‘ghost’), but most frequently of an order of created beings.

Mt. 18:10; Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

Acts 12:15; And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, it is his angel.

End of Quote!

Now, let us get into the subject at hand, The Seven Churches and Church Ages. The first two chapters of Revelations illustrate the meticulous accuracy of the Bible’s prophecies and give absolute proof with inspiration. It should be obvious to anyone who seeks with the guidance of the Spirit of God, that not one mere human, or group of humans, could possibly foresee and describe the future so accurately on so many levels. To do this at the same time and with such perceptiveness and clarity is humanly impossible. To have described the conditions in the Seven Assemblies that existed in the First Century, and simultaneously describe accurately the conditions in a series of future historical periods of church history, varying in duration from less than a hundred to more than a thousand

years is only possible with God.

The seven assemblies are literal places as well as symbols of the seven stages through which the “universal church” would have to go through, beginning with its launching at the Feast of Pentecost in 27 AD, as described in the second Chapter of Acts.

The literal places and the PROPHECIES of the STAGES of DEVELOPMENT is strengthened when we perceive the letter of John in the context of REVELATION as shown in Chapter 1.

*“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this **PROPHECY**. . .” vs 3.*

*“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which **ARE**, and the things which **SHALL BE HEREAFTER**.” vs 19.*

All seven stages in the development of the “universal church” described in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 will be completed during the period between Yahshua’s First and Second Comings. Read, Psalm 110:1 and Mt. 22:41-46, which tell of the time between His peaceful mission as Shiloh. Then read, Genesis 49:10; Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:30-38; Acts 1:9-10 which tells of His return as the “Expectation of the Peoples” in power and glory as Conqueror and Ruler. (Genesis 49:11-12; Zechariah 14:3-9; Acts 1:11-12; Mt. 24:30.) All of Yahshua’s parables of the Kingdom of Heaven refer to this same period of immediately before or after it.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Israel, (Ge. 32:28; 35:10) had been promised, that through their descendants, there would some day be a righteous government on the earth. A Kingdom of righteous government on earth, according to principles laid down by Heaven. In this promised Kingdom, all nations of the earth would be involved and would be blessed. (Ge. 12:1-3; 17:7-8; 26:2-5; 28:13-14; 32:12,24; 35:10-11.)

After the Exodus from Egypt and 40 years of rigorous preparation, (about BC 1400) the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob tried to establish such a Kingdom, “Theocracy.” Moses, Joshua the son of Nun, Saul, David, and Solomon all tried. In regard to this effort, God said, “Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then shall ye be a PECULIAR TREASURE unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of priests and an holy nation. Ex. 19:5. For further reference to this “Treasure” hid in the field, read Deuteronomy 14:2; 26:18-19; Psalms 135:4; Malachi 3:16-17; also 1Peter 2:9-12.

Later about BC950 after the death of Solomon, the Northern Ten Tribes (House of Israel) seceded from their union with the Jews (Two Tribes, Judah and Benjamin), or the house of Judah, over the issue of “taxation without representation” (1Kings 12:1-33; 2Chronicles 10:1-19). To prevent fraternization with the Jews, King Jeroboam of the Northern Kingdom adopted national worship of the gods of Egypt and Babylon, (1Kings 12:26-33). Those priests, Levites, and ordinary citizens who were loyal to God thereupon left Samaria and moved to Jerusalem so they could continue to worship Him. (2 Chronicles 11:14-16)

So long as the House of Israel (Ten Tribes) persisted in its apostasy, they were not to be known as Israel, and God declared that the House of Israel would find their national grave in Assyria. Nahum 1:14; Ezekiel 20:39. Jacob’s deathbed prophesy (Ge. 49:1-33) and the blessing of Moses (Deu. 33:1-27) both concern the situation of all Twelve Tribes in the last days of the Age, as do the New Testament references in Luke 22:30; Acts 26:7 and James 1:1.

The LORD also promised identification of the Ten Tribes and their reinstatement at such time as they will give up their idolatry and return to Him:

“In the place where it was said unto them, ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.” Hosea 1:10-11.

The reassurance that God will continue to deal with the dispersed peoples of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, who will finally be reunited is a similar theme as spoken through Amos, a prophet to the Ten Tribes. And by Ezekiel 31:18-28.and they shall be no more two nations.

“For lo, I will sift the House of Israel among the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth.” Amos 9:9.

The significance of the “seven” Assemblies in relationship to the development of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth should not be lost to the believer. In Holy Scriptures, seven is a number used to represent fullness or completion.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear. . .” This solemn injunction pronounced at the end of the letters to the Assemblies, was used by Yahshua in His earthly ministry. When He spoke in parables to the crowds concerning the Kingdom and concluded with this exhortation, it was clear that there was hidden depth of meaning in His message, a meaning intended especially for His Disciples. (Mt. 13:9-17) The presence of a hidden meaning in each of the seven letters is also punctuated by this instruction to the listener to take heed and give the most earnest attention, for **only those with an “opened” ear would be able to understand.**

As we see how this “history told in advance” has unfolded until now, and is still unfolding, we are reassured that our understanding is correct concerning the way past events have fitted into Yahshua’s plan for the salvation of the earth. His plan is definitely “on track.” **Current world events reported in today’s media are proceeding as we have understood they would.**

As the **SEVEN STAGES** were prophesied to develop, there were to be ever-increasing evil influences at work in them, beginning with relatively minor ones in **EPHESUS** and **SMYRNA**, but growing rapidly in **PERGAMOS** and **THYATIRA**, and reaching a climax in the powerful, worldly, corrupt, bloody Church of the inquisition, **SARDIS**. Next comes the era of the Reformation, religious freedom, good will, brotherly love, and world-wide missions symbolized by the assembly in **PHILADELPHIA**; and then, there is the final stage, today’s cynical, lukewarm, apostate, self-centered and self-satisfied **LAODICEA**.

In each of these stages, Yahshua says there will be some members who hold fast to His name and His faith and works, and who will overcome the evils and obstacles of this particular time in history. In the message to each successive historical stage, the critique, positive and negative, applies perfectly to that assembly, the trials and temptations to be overcome.

To comprehend the book of Revelations in general, and Chapters 2 and 3 in particular, one needs to recognize that these messages were, clearly, not intended for the general public. They are specifically directed to certain people, i.e., “His servants,” for their enlightenment and guidance. The messages were sent and “signified”:

“The Revelation of YAHSHUA the Messiah, which God gave unto to him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.”
Revelation 1:1

THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL TIME PERIODS OF THE CHURCH

EPHESUS, and **CHURCH PROPHECY** from AD 27-100. Rev. 2:1-7.

The city of Ephesus was situated at the Western terminus of the great system of Roman roads in the Province of Asia. During the First Century, it was foremost in trade and commerce and proudly proclaimed itself to be “the first city of Asia.” A center of Greek culture, it boasted one of the “Seven Wonders” of the ancient world, the famous Temple of “Artemis, the Virgin Huntress,” also known by the Roman name of Diana. Artisans of the Temple

of Diana, rather like some of our labor unions today, wished to preserve their job security in production of icons, shrines and souvenirs of the Temple. Acts 19:24-41. The date tree was sacred to Diana, and was depicted on Ephesian coins. With the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman General Titus, AD 68-70, Ephesus became the **center of the Messianic Monotheistic Apostolic Faith.**

Ephesus means desirable and the assembly at Ephesus was clearly the purist and least contaminated of the seven. Believers during the Ephesus period were obedient to the words of Yahshua, and were baptized into Yahshua (Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:47-48; 19:5), who also received the baptism by the Holy Ghost, with the evidence of speaking in another tongue by the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 8: 14-20; 10:44-46; 19:6).

SMYRNA, and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 100-313. Rev. 2:8-11.

Smyrna was located about 50 miles to the north of Ephesus. During the First Century, its loyalty to Rome was said to have been “conspicuous.” Smyrna was famous for its athletic games with crowns of garlands for the winners. The hill, Pagos, with stately public buildings on its circular top, had made the expression, “the crown of Smyrna” a familiar phrase. On its coins, the city is represented as a figure wearing a crown. Believers in Yahshua have been persecuted throughout history, but the Smyrna period was to be an intensely bitter climax of torture. Historians tell us that after the terrible torturer, Diocletian, there were more believers than before.

During the Smyrna stage, leaders and followers alike were tortured and martyred for their faith. Simon and James were also martyred at this time period. Simon who had become the Bishop of Jerusalem was crucified in AD107. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was thrown to wild beasts in AD110. The early members were largely Jews in whose synagogues the Apostles taught, as related in the Book of Acts, see Acts 14:1-2; 16:13; 18:4,11. Spies crept in among them who were false Jews, bent on their destruction, and thus the synagogue of satan.

“And no marvel, for satan transformeth himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.” 2Cor. 11:14-15; Rev. 20:12.

PERGAMOS and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 313-500. Rev. 2: 12-17.

The city of Pergamos was located in clockwise direction, about 50 miles north of Smyrna. During the First Century, it was famous not only for its great library, but was said to have originated the use of parchment for the making of books. Behind the town was a hill, about twice the height of the Washington Monument, where temples had been erected to Zeus Soter, Athena, Dionysus, and Aesculapius. The most famous of these was the temple of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, whose symbol was the snake (Caduceus), and in connection with it, the city prided itself on its great medical school.

Evidently the people of the Roman Empire were impressed by the bravery and fortitude they observed in the Smyrna period, and were willing to listen to the message concerning the Messiah. This must have, in contrast to the gods of Rome, appealed to them as a powerful religion. The obviously declining devotion to the gods of Rome was embarrassing to the government. Politicians are much the same the world over. The new Emperor who came to power in 313, like politicians everywhere, evidently decided, “if you can’t beat them, join them.” That is just what Constantine did. He became ruler of the society both spiritually and politically.

THYATIRA, and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 500-1500. Rev. 2:18-19.

In clockwise direction for Pergamos, the city of Thyatira was situated on the border of Mysia, some 40 miles south of Pergamos and a little to the left on the road to Sardis. Thyatira symbolized the fourth stage in the development of the “universal church” and was to encompass the thousand-year period between the “classical antiquity” of Greece and Rome and the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It was a period of immense

activity, barbarism, ignorance, confusion, suffering and turmoil, the beginning of the ten-toe period of Daniel 2:34.

SARDIS, and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 1500-1700. Rev. 3:1-6.

Sardis, a thriving city of the First Century, was located, clockwise, south of Thyatira. It had been the old capital of Lydia, Kingdom of the fabulously wealthy Croesus. Situated on the river Pactolus, high on a rocky plateau, Sardis “the Heights” was believed by its inhabitants to be impregnable, but twice it had fallen to an enemy for the same reason, **failure to “be watchful.”**

Its defender had left unguarded the sheer cliff side they thought could not be scaled. The city was taken first by Cyrus, the Median, he surprised it in BC 549. Again in BC 218, Antiochus did the same thing. At the end of the Thyatira period, the Catholic church was in complete control. It was a church of ritual, formality, and worldliness, that did not hesitate to punish severely, even to death anyone who questioned its authority.

Thou livest and art dead: 2Tim 3:5. Sardis was physically alive, but spiritually dead. 1Tim. 5:6;

PHILADELPHIA, and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 1700-1930. Rev. 3:7-13.

The city originally known as Philadelphia, during the early First Century, was located about 28 miles southeast of Sardis in wine-growing country. Not unexpectedly, we find that its chief pagan cult was that of the “god of wine,” Dionysus, the Roman Bacchus. Philadelphia suffered from a series of earthquakes and tremors so that its inhabitants lived in a constant dread of having to go out from the city. The expression, “firm as a pillar” had special meaning for the Philadelphians. After a great earthquake, the city had to be rebuilt and the Emperor, Tiberius, came to its rescue. The renewed city was renamed “Neo-Caesarea,” or “City of the Young Caesar.”

During this period, enormous missionary efforts were made to carry the good news around the world. Many Bible translations were printed in hundreds of languages. The Gutenberg Press, in contrast to Sardis, gave the time period of Philadelphia, “AN OPEN DOOR AND NO MAN COULD SHUT IT.” Rev 3:8. The church in previous ages had ceased to teach the second coming and taught that the church itself was the Kingdom of Yahshua on Earth. Now they were free to read the Bible and to study and contemplate such passages as Acts 1:9-12; 2:1-44; Romans 6:1-10, together with Zechariah 14:4, Matthew 24:29-30,37 and many others.

LAODICIA, and CHURCH PROPHECY from AD 1930-TO END OF AGE. Rev. 3:14-22.

The city of Laodicea was located clockwise, southwest of Philadelphia, on the River Lycus, not far from Colossi. The city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 62 and rebuilt by the wealthy Laodiceans who rejected any aid from the state. In the First Century, it was a very prosperous, self-satisfied community, famous for its black wool cloth and carpets. It was a center of trade, commerce, and banking. It was also famous for its medical school.

The site had a major disadvantage. It was entirely controlled by the road-system, so that no permanent water supply was available. Large blocks of stone, bored through the center and cemented end-to-end were used to pipe water to the city from hot springs some distance away, and probably arrived lukewarm. The site was eventually abandoned. For all its great wealth and prosperity, the city was able to produce neither the healing power of hot water nor the refreshing power of cold water.

Laodicea represents the final stage of the Church in which the Laity (Laos) would dictate doctrine, and secular doctrines would prevail. It is the modern, apostate assembly that has rejected the basic truths of the Scriptures as “Extremist Fundamentalism.” To days nominal believers, and those of the Philadelphia period is noted by historian, M. Susan Power in, “Before the Convention: Religion and the Founders.”

Lack of sound Biblical teachings has caused the nations to become spiritually sick. The Bible teaches that

man is not a brute beast, but was created in the image (spiritual) of the Most High God (Ge. 1:27). He was made a little lower than the angels, (Ps. 8:5). The final stage of the Church has accepted the unprovable philosophical assumption that man evolved by the processes of nature. **THIS TYPE OF TEACHING VOIDS ANY IMPLIED OBLIGATION OR RESPONSIBILITY TO A CREATOR.**

“But these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not.” 2Peter 2:12.

Many modern churches have been overrun by secularists who attend in order to make social or business contacts *“having a form of the godliness, but denying the power thereof. . .”* 2Tim 3:5. “Liberation Theology,” reflecting Marxist-Leninist phantasies concerning values and economic dynamics, has been introduced, appealing to those who reject the work ethic while seeking power as nominal Christians, with Capitalism as their scapegoat. (Refer to Michael Novak’s *Will it Liberate?*, 1986 New York, Paulist Press). Feminist clergy are found extolling abortion almost as a sacrament, and avowed homosexuals are being ordained by bishops who praise their “alternative lifestyle.” In short, having rejected the Bible as their guide, the “laity” now dictates the doctrines and dogmas of Laodicea.

Laodicea was prophesied to be the final stage of the church. Yahshua’s Parables of the Kingdom made it clear that there will ultimately be a great separation of good and evil. (Matthew 13:3-30, 36-42). The tares in their early stage of growth look like wheat, however, when they grow they hinder the wheat from bringing forth good grain.

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?” Matthew 7:16.

- o Some contemporary liberal theologians are already referring to the “post-Christian era.”
- o Secular humanist organizations are calling for a “non-theistic” (non-god) religion.
- o Other groups are emphasizing **Protection of Creation** and a return to “faith in Nature and the natural order of things.”

WARNING

Advocates of clean air, clean water, and good health, who revere faith in the natural order, “un-fallen and un-depraved,” and those who use the term “Nature” as much as our fathers used the word “God” may find an easy transition from those sentiments to new forms of ancient paganism. **These new forms are being dressed up in high-tech terminology, a religion that has always tolerated and promoted unrestrained cruelty and bestiality.** Bible believers may find it hard to resist an “environmental religion.”

SUMMARY

In this short study we have presented an overview of chapter 2&3 in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is not the “Revelation of St. John” who merely wrote it down as he was instructed to do, but it is the REVELATION OF YAHSHUA THE MESSIAH for the guidance of His servants.

Chapter 2 and 3 consists of symbols, and coded messages to the seven existing Assemblies in Asia Minor revealing, the spirit in them and GOD’S attitude towards them. At the same time, they disclose seven future stages of the “universal church” as they would develop during the succeeding 2,000 years.

Note: Excerpts contained in this writing are from ISRAEL FOREVER! , by Phillip Brosius Wisman.