

known for killing the prophets of God (1 Kung. 21:25-26; 18:4). In Revelation she is the symbol an apostate church who uses the state to persecute God's people (see Rev. 17:1-6). Are there true Christians during this terrible time of darkness? (Rev. 2:24-26; 18:4)

- a. Yes, groups like e.g. the Waldensians
- b. No, all went into apostasy

14. What is said about the fifth church – Sardis? (Rev. 3:1)
- a. It is a dead church and is known for this
 - b. It has a reputation of being alive but is dead
 - c. It is said to be dead but is a living and vibrant church
15. The fervor of the Reformation had cooled off and stagnated during the 17th and 18th century. The Protestant churches were preoccupied with doctrinal purity, but lost their relationship with Christ. So called “heretics” were persecuted just like the Roman Church had done. Sardis, an impregnable fortress on a hill, is a fitting symbol of Christianity during 1565-1755 AD (Rev. 3:1-6). They lived off of their name, but not up to the name. They were spiritually dead. Some responded, however, to Jesus' call for revival (Rev. 3:2). The Pietist movement was a reaction against the orthodoxy within Lutheranism. The Puritans protested the dry formalism of the Anglican Church.
16. Read Rev. 3:7-13. Towards the end of the 1700's and the beginning of the 1800's, great revivals took place across the world. Methodism's Wesley brothers and Whitfield were first in line. Then came revivals with Dwight Moody, Charles Finney and others, including the Advent awakening with Joseph Wolff and William Miller. Philadelphia means “brotherly love” and the church is an appropriate picture of Christianity at this time.
17. The last church represents God's true church just prior to the Second Coming. It is a lukewarm, indifferent church. What admonition do they get from Jesus? (Rev. 3:14-22)
- a. Repent and open the door for Jesus
 - b. Leave and start a purer church
 - c. Change their doctrines

The Apocalypse

The Seven Churches

2-3

Please circle your answers based on Bible texts in brackets.

1. Who dictated the letters to the seven churches? (Rev. 1:11-13)
 - a. The Angel Gabriel
 - b. The Apostle John
 - c. Jesus Christ
2. What does the number seven represent in the Bible? (Gen. 2:1-2; 4:15; Lev. 26:21, 28; Ps. 12:6; 79:12)
 - a. God
 - b. Completeness
 - c. Evil
3. Is Jesus' message to the seven churches exclusively directed to the literal churches of Asia Minor? (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)
 - a. Yes, only to them.
 - b. No, also to the whole of Christendom.
 - c. They have no relevance for the literal churches in Asia.
4. Why *these* seven churches? Many scholars agree that Jesus chose these churches by prophetic insight because their characteristics match those of seven succeeding periods of church history from the time of John until the end of time. Viewed from this perspective, the seven churches become extra interesting to study. We can therefore see a threefold target group for the messages of the seven churches:
 - a. Historical - the local churches of Asia Minor in the 1st century
 - b. Spiritual – all of Christendom in all times
 - c. Prophetic – every church represents an era in church history
5. In New Testament times, Ephesus was a leading trade city of Asia Minor and the bulwark of Christianity. The church was likely founded by Paul, Priscilla and Aquilla (Acts 18:18-21). Paul wrote a

letter to them, which is preserved in the New Testament. It was from Ephesus that “all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:10) The mission was so successful that it threatened the state religion of the famous temple of Diana (Acts 19:26-40).

6. What rebuke does Jesus give to Ephesus? (Rev. 2:1-6)
 - a. They are not perseverant enough
 - b. They allow false doctrines to flourish
 - c. They have lost their first love
7. The church of Ephesus is a fitting representation of the early Christian Church (31-100 AD). From the time of the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, the church was zealous in missionary labor and saw thousands of converts daily. How far did the Gospel reach in that generation? (Col. 1:23, Rom. 10:18, Acts 17:6)
 - a. To Jerusalem and Samaria
 - b. To the whole Roman Empire
 - c. To the whole world
8. Whose deeds does Jesus hate? (Rev. 2:6, 15)
 - a. The Girgashites’
 - b. The Romans’
 - c. The Nicolatians’
9. The next church is Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11). Smyrna was known in church history for one of the oldest martyr stories (Polycarp). Jesus represents Himself as the risen Savior to encourage the church to endure persecution unto death. Jesus comforts the church with the promise of the resurrection, just like Paul did to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Judaism was a protected religion in the Roman empire. Christianity was a Jewish sect. By telling the Romans that the Christians were not real Jews, the Jews could expose Christians to persecution. But who is a true Jew? (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-9; 1 Pet. 2:9-10, Gal. 3:29)
 - a. Anyone who has a Jewish mother
 - b. A person with Jewish DNA
 - c. Those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah
10. If we apply the message of Smyrna to church history, it fits perfectly with the time of the cruel persecution from 100-313 AD. Fox’s *Book of Martyrs* describes no less than 8 persecutions during this period. The most cruel one was the 10 year long persecution under the time of Diocletian between 303-313 AD, when emperor Constantine put an end to persecution and made Christianity the state religion. These ten years of persecution were predicted in Rev. 2:10, since a day in prophecy represents a year in reality (Ezek. 4:6; Numb. 14:34). Many Christians chose to betray Jesus when threatened with death. These were not true Christians. Nevertheless, in spite of persecution, Christianity was not destroyed. As Tertullian put it: “The blood of Christians is seed” (*Apology*, 50).
11. What would happen in the Christian church after the time of the Apostles? (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18)
 - a. There would be a great apostasy from the faith
 - b. Jesus would return and the time of trouble would begin
 - c. The pagan world would be converted to Christ
12. The third church (Pergamum) is said to dwell “where Satan’s throne is” (Rev. 2:13). Historically speaking, Pergamum was the seat of paganism in Asia Minor – known for the grand Altar of Zeus. Prophetically, the church fits the conditions in Christianity during 313-538 AD – known as an era of compromise. After the conversion of Constantine, Christianity became a state religion. When Rome fell in 476 AD, the bishop of Rome took over the political titles and affairs of the West (Rev. 13:2) and idolatry and false doctrines became a part of the official church (Rev. 2:12-17).
13. The message of the fourth church (Thyatira, Rev. 2:18-29) is given to the faithful at a time of full apostasy. Those “who have not known the depths of Satan” He gives an encouragement to persevere and hold fast to what they have. Some receive a rebuke for allowing “that woman Jezebel.” Who is this woman that makes people commit adultery and worship idols? Jezebel was the dominant and bloodthirsty queen of king Ahab in the Old Testament. She was