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CHURCH HISTORY PORTRAYED

Each letter to a specific church (*Revelation 2 and 3*) describes dominant characteristics of a particular period of church history. We have the advantage of looking back over these things today and can readily see how these various periods correspond with what is presented in these letters.

The first letter, that to **Ephesus**, provides a good picture of the spiritually powerful apostolic church of the first century.

The letter to **Smyrna** covers the martyr period of the church, the second and third centuries during which various pagan Roman rulers persecuted God's people.

Pergamos pictures the corruption of Christian testimony through the uniting of the church and the state under Constantine. This laid the foundation for the strong influence of the church during the fourth and fifth centuries.

The letter to **Thyatira** deals with the period of the Dark Ages from the sixth century on through the fifteenth.

The letter to **Sardis** describes for the rise and development of Protestantism. The Reformation, which was a powerful movement in its beginning, did not maintain its strong spiritual emphasis indefinitely.

Many Bible students are convinced that the letters to **Philadelphia** and **Laodicea** picture church conditions running side by side preceding the Church's Rapture. **Philadelphia** illustrates that which is genuine and true to the Lord Jesus Christ. **Laodicea** illustrates that which is false. Thus, the conditions pictured by **Philadelphia** and **Laodicea** can be easily discerned in Christendom today in many denominations and communities and even local churches.

This was taken from the commentary,
Revelation, by Theodore H. Epp