



# Messenger Project Newsletter

## The Messenger

messengerproject.com  
714.537.8362

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A NONPROFIT CORPORATION PROMOTING THE BIBLE THROUGH THE ARTS

**Messenger Project Members**  
Lionel De Leon, President-Founder,  
Editor-Publisher of *The Messenger*  
Raymond Genovese, Treasurer  
Joie De Leon, Secretary

### Messenger Notes

**Messenger Project** was unable to record in May but looks to pick things up this month.

### Revelation's 7 Churches



The book of Revelation has messages for seven churches that existed in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) at the time it was written. But these seven churches are also interpreted as a prediction of church history from the apostolic era to the end times.

**Ephesus** is associated with the apostolic church (33-270 A.D.). Jesus' disciples were faithful to spread the gospel throughout the Roman empire. But as pagans converted, their beliefs became entrenched in Christian thought. By the end of the third century, the church had left its first love to become mingled with paganism. Jesus commends this church for being hard working, suffering, patient, tenacious, intolerant of evil men, haters of idolaters and discerners of false apostles. He chastises them for their weak love for him and warned them to turn from their sins.

**Smyrna** is associated with the persecuted church under Diocletian (284-305 A.D.).

They are commended without any rebuke or indication of sin. Smyrna was largely pagan. On one end of the main street, the *Street of Gold*, stood the Temple of Zeus, and at the other end stood the Temple of Cybele, *the Mother of the Gods*. Smyrna was the center of emperor worship in the Roman Empire, boasting a temple to Tiberius Caesar. Jesus commends this church for their troubles and claims that by being poor they are rich. He tells them not to worry about suffering, even unto death, because he will give them life as their prize of victory. Many Christians suffered unto death under Roman persecution.

**Pergamum** is associated with the church period that began under Constantine (305-476 A.D.). The church at Pergamum was engulfed by a city that was largely pagan and devoted to idol worship. Jesus commends this church for remaining faithful and true to his name while living in an area controlled by Satan. He chastises them for having people who followed the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (eating food sacrificed to idols and committing sexual immorality). When Christianity was adopted by the State through the emperor Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it became corrupted with false teachers who assumed leadership roles.

**Thyatira** is associated with the Dark Ages (875-950 A.D.). This church had works, love, service, and faith. But they allowed false teaching and immorality. There were many trade guilds in the city, and it was almost impossible to do well in business without belonging to one of these guilds. That became a problem because paganism and immorality were rife in guild life. There was a temple for fortune-tellers in Thyatira, with a powerful female oracle presiding over it. Jesus commends this church for their deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance and growth. He chastises

them for tolerating the self-titled prophetess Jezebel (who was sexually immoral and ate food sacrificed to idols). During the Dark Ages, the church was corrupt with false teachings (indulgences, etc) and immorality.

**Sardis** is associated with the Reformation Church (1500-1599 A.D.). The word *Sardis* means *escaping one* and the Reformation period is when Protestants left the Roman Catholic church (escaped?). The church in Sardis had acquired a reputation for lax moral standards. The city was pagan with many individual mystery cults. The temple of Artemis was one of its major points of interest. Jesus chastises this church for claiming to be alive while being spiritually dead, and he commends only a few from this church for not being tainted by sinful living.

**Philadelphia** is associated with the missionary Church (1700-present). It is a church that had endured patiently, and is commended without any rebuke or indication of resident sin. Jesus commends this church for keeping his word and not denying his name despite being weak. Today's church is weakened with liberal theology, humanism, and a belief in atheistic origins (theory of evolution). Jesus promises to keep this church "from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." Is this a prophecy of the Rapture?

**Laodicea** is associated with the end times and is a church with a lukewarm faith. Laodicea was a primary hub for the Roman aqueduct system. It was a wealthy and self-sufficient city that had good income from the wool industry and was an extremely wealthy banking center. Jesus chastises this church for being spiritually poor while thinking themselves rich.

Jesus' messages to the churches allow us to examine ourselves and understand the serious responsibility of being a Christian.