

# Seven Churches, Not Seven Church Ages

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# What you may have heard . . .

The seven churches of Revelation 1-3 are seven church ages, 7 distinct eras . . . usually unpacked something like this . . .

- The Ephesus Age – AD 30 - 100 = strong doctrine, but lack of love
- The Smyrna Age – AD 100-313 = persecution
- The Pergamos Age – AD 313 – 500 = church division
- The Thyatira Age – AD 500-1500 = False gospel
- The Sardis Age – AD 1500-1700 = asleep
- The Philadelphia Age – 1700 to 1930 = patient endurance
- The Laodician Age – 1930 to today (and Rapture) = lukewarm Christians

# Why These are Not Church Ages

- If this is a chronological prophecy, it is completely unlike any other chronological prophecy in Scripture
- Daniel 2:39 “And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.
- That is: the chronological prophecies include chronological markers, “this . . . then that . . .” – Daniel 2, 7, 9, 12, Revelation itself!, 1 Thess 4; 1 Cor 15, etc.!
- In Revelation 1-4 there are no such words or labels giving chronological sequence
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# Those who think these are ages . . .

- Can't agree when the ages started/stopped
  - They divide these 7 up differently . . .
  - With hundreds of years of differences between them
  - And since Scripture is silent, all of this is up for grabs (depending upon which teacher you follow)

# Why Stop with 7 Church Ages?

- There were 12 apostles, so why not 12 church ages?
- The NT has 27 books, so why not 27 church ages?
- Why look to these literal, real churches as church ages?
- If we hadn't ever heard this, and then heard Harold Camping or the JW's teaching it, we would (rightly) criticize him/them for reading into Scripture

# Why Stop with 7 Church Ages Continued . . .

- Since the church at Ephesus was a real church mentioned in Scripture . . .
- And the church at Rome was a real church mentioned in Scripture, why not look for a “Rome” age . . .
- Or a “Corinthian age”
- Or a “Galatian age”
- Or a “Philippian age”
- etc.

# Further, if these are church ages . . .

- Then God misled His people for almost 2,000! Years!
- Titus 2:13, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ”
- If these are 7 church ages that God is telling us about, then the believers living in the Symrna age were misled – they should have been looking for the Thyatira age!



# Personal Anecdote

- I have heard this preached multiple times through the years (and believed it) . . .
- Yet, the guys doing the preaching always put us in the age right before the Rapture (either the Philadelphia or the Laodician age)

# Personal Anecdote Continued . . .

I have yet to hear this and have the preacher say:

- Here we are in the Thyatira age, the age of false doctrine . . .
- and after we are all dead and gone, there will be 4 more church ages . . .
- each lasting hundreds (perhaps thousands) of years . . .
- and then the Lord will return.”

# Anecdote continued . . .

- Any pastor who said we are not in the last age prior to the Rapture would be kicked out of his pulpit (amen!) . . .
- How do we KNOW we are not in the Sardis age? Couldn't we be in the Sardis age and not know it?
- If we are not in the Sardis age, did the Christians back then know they were in the Sardis age?
- How would we know we had ended the Sardis age?
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# Personal Anecdote Concluded

- My point: those promoting this man-made scheme always put themselves (and us) in the last era (according to their plan) . . . .
- That doesn't seem legitimate to me . . . .
- Because it is a man-made scheme, a scheme that I really don't like at all
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# Hermeneutics!

- It all comes down to hermeneutics (the science of interpreting Scripture)
- We, at Great Hope, follow the literal, grammatical, historical interpretation of Scripture
  - Literal = the words are defined by their normal meaning (we do not look for “spiritual” meanings)
  - Grammatical = the words are used in sentences, which are used in paragraphs, which convey ideas to us. We pay attention to words, sentences, and paragraphs.

# Hermeneutics

- Historical – we ask, “What did this mean when John wrote it?”
- The “Three Truths” of Scripture
  - Timed Truth = what it meant to John's readers when the Holy Spirit moved John and inspired what he wrote
  - The Timeless Truth = how what John wrote applies not only to those believers back then, but to every believer through all time
  - The Timely Truth = how what John wrote back then applies to me today in my situation

# Hermeneutics Continued

- God used written words to communicate to us, and in doing so, He was extremely clear about what He said
- Admittedly, there are confusing things in Scripture (Ezekiel's vision, for example) . . .
- But even then, the words God used are clear, even if we fail to grasp the concepts
- God was not hiding “spiritual” meanings that the super-spiritual can mine out of the Word

# Hermeneutics Continued

- What God wrote, He expects us to
  - Read
  - Understand
  - Obey
  - Revelation 1:3, “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*”

# Hermeneutics Continued yet some more!

- The Word of God is not a “Code” that we must unscramble . . .
- The 7 churches are just 7 churches that needed to hear from God . . . and we need their messages too!
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# Hermeneutics Continued

- There is no good reason to see these churches anything but churches
- And no reader in John's day, reading Revelation, would have seen these 7 as church ages

# Furthermore . . .

- Since we have detailed instructions from God about what He desires for His church . . .
- Why would we look for prophecies where entire “ages” of churches were quite disobedient to Him?

# Conclusion

- Do I think we are in the last of the last of the last days?
- Absolutely
- But not because I think we are in the “Laodicean Age” age.
- I believe it because Scripture says we are in the last days – This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. – 2 Timothy 3:1
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Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **Hath in these last days** spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds

- Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2Peter 3:3



- I am looking for the Lord's return in obedience to Titus 2:13-15

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Titus 2:13-15

# Next Week in ABF

How we are going to treat Revelation in our  
Sunday morning series