

SPEAKERS

January 1 – Ken Storm,
Holy Communion

January 8 – Ivan Niemela

January 15 – Ken Storm

January 22 – Nathan Ruonavara,
Potluck Meal Following Service

January 29 – Herb Jarvi

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Service: 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday Bible Study:
7:00 p.m.

CONTACT

Website:

www.tapiolachurch.org

Mailing: P.O. Box 531,
Houghton, MI 49931

Location:

17602 N. Lake Ave.,
Tapiola, MI 49916
(906) 334-2766

Contact: Ken Storm, Pastor
(906) 482-3234

The Seven Churches of Asia

“*Revelation*” reveals events that will arise in the hearts of men and in the world at large in the latter days. Although anybody can read this book, it is only those who have washed away their sins in the blood of Jesus who will be able, someday, to understand the words of this prophesy (Eph 1:7-9). Jesus instructed John to write down everything he saw in this book and to send it to each church. Although the entire book contains much information pertaining to the present-day, this article only covers the spiritual condition of the seven churches of Asia Minor; their strengths, their weaknesses and what God expected from them before the coming judgment.

1. **Ephesus** (Rev 2:1-7) – this church was very strict: it hated sin but it also could not tolerate sinners. In their zeal to please God, they focused their attention on exposing those who say that they are believers and are not (Christ’s responsibility) instead of focusing on preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins (the church mission). Thus, Jesus told this church to repent of its misguided fervor to root out evil and to return to do the first works.
2. **Smyrna** (Rev 2:8-11) – this church had little to offer other than the riches of heaven. This led to strife from those within the church who wanted to do more and from those outside the church who wanted to cast its believers into prison. Jesus knew of these troubles and counseled the believers to continue preaching repentance, despite the opposition, and to remain faithful unto death. Whoever heard this preaching would not suffer the second death if, by the grace of God, they repented and believed the gospel (Mark 1:15).
3. **Pergamos** (Rev 2:12-17) – this church had not denied its faith, even though one of its members was martyred. However, they also embraced the doctrines of Balaam and Nicolaitans which caused idolatry and immorality amongst the church people. Jesus bade this church to repent of its pagan beliefs and to return to the truth in order to receive a new name known only to those who overcome their sin.
4. **Thyatira** (Rev 2:18-29) – this church, like the three preceding ones, did many good works but fell short by allowing false prophets like Jezebel of the Old Testament into their pulpit. God gave Jezebel many opportunities to repent of her unbelief, as He does with us today, but she did not repent; neither did Thyatira, even when God called them because they were too comfortable in their own understandings. But to those who were already in faith and who did not succumb to false doctrine, Jesus only asked them to hold on to what little faith they had unto the end.
5. **Sardis** (Rev 3:1-6) – this church had an outward appearance of being spiritually alive, but inwardly it was almost dead. There were few believers in this church and Jesus wanted them to remind others of how one comes into faith. If these believers did not speak of these things, Jesus would come as a thief in the night upon them; for those who did not listen, their names would be blotted out from the book of life.
6. **Philadelphia** (Rev 3:7-13) – this church, like Smyrna, had little to boast about, yet it faithfully preached the truth: the way of salvation through the blood of Christ. And like Ephesus, this church dealt with false Christians in its ranks, but instead of weeding them out, they held open the door to heaven to all who would listen.
7. **Laodicea** (Rev 3:14-22) – this church had little need for the word of God: they were lukewarm or, in other words, complacent in their faith. Jesus called this church wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked because they were

unaware of their lost condition in their lives of abundance and ease. Jesus left this message for anyone who cared to listen, *“I stand at the door, and knock: if any hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”*.

It should be noted that all seven churches began in living faith. God held nothing against them. However, little by little people lost their way by doubting the Bible and by looking at other churches saying, *“How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise”* (Deut 12:30). Also, pastors in some of the churches were not always faithful in their duty to bring God’s word to the people, thus their listeners lacked spiritual guidance. Eventually it became as it was in the days of the Judges that every man did that which seemed right to him. As a result, certain churches and some individuals within all seven churches became servants of Satan without knowing it. The good news for us today is that not all people lost their faith; a remnant was able to retain its first love in spite of many difficulties. Jesus, nevertheless, always expects the faithful to reach out to others with the Word—not with works or our own understanding.

The intent of Jesus’ critique of these churches was not to expose sin but to give hope to the sinner. Jesus did not ask anyone to clean up their lives but to repent of their sins because the Holy Spirit would lead their lives thereafter. The problem with the churches was not that they contained sinners in their pews but that the gospel message of repentance and forgiveness of sins was diminished or altogether dismissed.

Issues like these are still present among God’s children today. Merely attending church, doing good deeds and honoring God with our lips provides no assurance of eternal salvation. God warns us not to worship Him based on precepts of men (Is 29:13). Rather, we are to try all spirits, including our own, to see if they are of God (1 John 4:1) for the Day of Judgment may be nearer than we think. *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith”* (Rev 3:22).

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen