

An Exposition of the Seven Church Ages

Revelation 1:20 - "The mystery of the **seven stars** which thou sawest in My right hand, and the **seven golden candlesticks**. The seven stars are the **angels** of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the **seven churches**."

THE SEVEN STARS AND THE SEVEN CANDLESTICKS

From the above prophetic verses, we can read that there are "seven stars" or seven angels that represent God's seven spirits sent forth by God to bring forth the light unto seven Gentile churches. Revelation 1:11: "Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, **write in a book, and send [it] unto the seven churches** which are in Asia; unto **Ephesus**, and unto **Smyrna**, and unto **Pergamos**, and unto **Thyatira**, and unto **Sardis**, and unto **Philadelphia**, and unto **Laodicea**."



John had seen this vision which was an event that was to transpire to seven Gentile churches in Asia Minor. The whole of the church ages is God dealing with the Gentiles, and calling out a "Gentile Bride" to Himself. That makes the "Church Ages" and the "Fulness of the Gentiles" one and the same thing.

This event was actually God, sending seven messengers to seven church ages, which was to transpire right after the Book of Acts until the second coming of the Lord. These Seven Gentile Church Ages were to last within a period of more or less 2000 years before Christ comes back for the literal rapture of the church. During this brief period, Jesus Christ is set to gather all His elected Gentile Bride from among all nations and denominations to prepare them for the "catching away" of the church as spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

After the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost, God then started to deal with the Gentiles for their day of salvation. The Gentile grace period started from A.D. 53 till this day. When the Spirit of God left the Jews on their own due to their rejection of the Messiah, He sent Apostle Paul to preach salvation unto the Gentiles. "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles"; were the words of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:44-48. And in Romans 11:25, Paul declared, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

Endtime believers have witnessed the true fulfillment of this prophesy today as we have identified who these seven messengers are and what the exact dates of these seven Gentile church ages were. Most Bible scholars know for sure that it was Apostle Paul who paved the way to where God's Gospel ministry to the Gentiles was started. Apostle

Paul wrote most of the Epistles in the New Testament benchmarking the "Grace Dispensation". Here in this chapter, I wish to lay out the times of the seven church ages along with their corresponding messengers for the benefit of the readers, as preached to us by Reverend William Branham, God's messenger of the age.

THE EPHESIAN CHURCH AGE (A.D. 53 to A.D. 170) STAR-MESSENGER: SAINT PAUL

Revelation 2: 1-7 reads:

"Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. **But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."



Apostle Paul

The messenger (angel) to the church of Ephesus was the apostle Paul. That he was the messenger to the first age of the Gentile era cannot be denied. Though to Peter was granted the authority to open the doors to the Gentiles, it was given to Paul to be their apostle and prophet. He was the Prophet-Messenger to the Gentiles. His prophetic office, by which he received the full revelation of the Word for the Gentiles, authenticated him as their apostolic messenger.

Paul founded the church at Ephesus about the middle of the first century. This enables us to set the date of the beginning of the Ephesian Church Age about 53 A.D. Paul was absolutely true to the Word. He never deviated from it no matter what the cost (Galatians 1:8-9). His ministry was in the power of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:1-5). And he had the evident fruit of his God-given ministry (2 Cor 11:2). The death of Paul, before the Revelation was given to John, does not at all annul the fact that he was the messenger to the Ephesian Church Age, for the messenger to every age, regardless of when he appears or goes, is the one who influences that age for God by means of a Word-manifested ministry.

THE SMYRNEAN CHURCH AGE (A.D. 170 to A.D. 312) STAR MESSENGER: SAINT IRENAEUS

Revelation 2: 8-11 reads-" And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and **ye shall have tribulation ten days**: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the

churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”



St. Ireneaus

The name of the second church age was **Smyrna**, which means “bitterness or myrrh.” It was associated with death, because the Christians here were dying. A **persecuted church**, the church of Smyrna passed through the fiery furnace of tribulations, but was a sweet-smelling savor unto Christ. The **great ten days of tribulation** means “ten years of the bloodiest persecution” which happened in this era. It was the bloodiest one of all of the persecutions since **Nero** in 67 A.D. **Diocletian was the emperor** in this age, which reigned during the year 303 to 312 A.D.

Ireneaus was the star-messenger to Smyrna. He was God’s messenger because he was the one who swept the country, into France (Gaul), establishing churches, and every one of them were established upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, in speaking in tongues, raising the dead, healing the sick, stopping the rains, and performing miracles daily. Ireneaus knew that the living God lived among His people.

THE PERGAMEAN CHURCH AGE (AD 312 to A.D. 606) STAR MESSENGER: SAINT MARTIN

Revelation 2: 12-17 reads: “*And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, [even] where Satan’s seat [is]; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas [was] my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].*”



St. Martin

The third church age is called **Pergamos**. And the date that this church existed was from **A.D. 312 to 606**. The age was the age of “**false doctrine, Satan lying, the foundation of papacy rule, and marriage of church and state**”. And the star, the angel of this church, was **Saint Martin**.

The life of Saint Martin is one of the greatest miracle-filled lives of anybody in the church ages. Martin was born in 315 in Hungary. However, his life work was in France where he labored in and around Tours as a bishop. He died in 399. This great saint was the uncle of another wonderful Christian, St. Patrick of Ireland. Saint Patrick was Saint Martin’s nephew; Saint Martin’s sister was the mother of Saint Patrick. He was a soldier to begin with. One day he was coming by and there was someone, a man laying cold and shivering, and all the people that was able to help the man just passed him by, like the priest and the Levites did in the Good Samaritan. But when Saint Martin come by, realizing his duty as a Christian believer, he had one coat, a cloak over his

shoulders; he cut it in two with his sword and gave half of it to the beggar; he took the other half. And that night began his career, for Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision, wrapped in that same robe that he cut half in two; which fulfilled the Scripture, “*Insomuch as you have done unto these little ones, you have did it unto Me.*” St. Martin stayed with the Word, just like Paul did. He was the messenger to this church age.

A biographer wrote of Martin on this wise. “No one ever saw him angry, or disturbed, or grieving, or laughing. He was always one and the same, and seemed something beyond mortal, wearing on his countenance a sort of celestial joy. Never was anything on his lips but Christ, never anything in his heart but piety, peace and pity. Often did he weep for the sins even of those his detractors, who when he was quiet and absent attacked him with viperous lips and poisoned tongues. Many hated him for virtues they themselves did not possess and could not imitate; and alas! his bitterest assailants were bishops.”

THE THYATIREAN CHURCH AGE (A.D 606 to A.D. 1520) STAR MESSENGER: SAINT COLUMBA

Revelation 2: 18-19 states: “*And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [to be] more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things*



St. Columba

sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

The fourth church age, “Thyatira,” means “to be lax, loose, or hazy.” The star-messenger was **Columba**, from Ireland and Scotland, which was a nephew to Saint Martin. His ministry began about sixty years after Saint Patrick.

The word, **Thyatira**, means a “**Continual Sacrifice**” - a continual presentation of the sacrifice of Christ. It also means the continual sacrifice in lives and labors of the true believers of the Lord. **This age is called the “Dark Ages”** because it was indeed the darkest period of all history. It was the age of **Pope Innocent III** who claimed that he was the “**vicar of Christ —supreme sovereign over the church and the world,**” who instituted the **inquisition** which under his direction shed more blood than at any other time in history except in the Reformation.

Thyatira was also the age of Pornocracy, the rule of harlots. The popes were not only guilty of immoral sex acts (fathering scores of illegitimate children, committing sodomy etc.) but were guilty of selling priestly offices to the highest bidders. Those who

would not agree to the Roman Catholic Doctrine in this age were were fed to lions, burnt, tortured and persecuted. Surely these Thyatirean saints were the **“cream of the crop”**, full of the Holy Ghost and faith, created unto good works, showing forth His praise, holding not their lives dear unto themselves, but gladly giving their all as a sweet sacrifice unto the Lord.

Columba was born in County Donegal, North Ireland, to the royal family of Fergus. He became a brilliant, consecrated scholar, committing to memory most of the Scripture. God called him in an audible voice to be a missionary. After he had heard the voice of God, nothing could stop him, and his miraculous ministry has caused many historians to acclaim him next to the apostles. So great was his ministry with the supernatural signs following that some (especially students in Rome) have thought the accounts were exaggerated. Saint Columba was the founder of a great Bible school on the island of Hy (off the S.W. coast of Scotland). From this Bible-centered island went forth mighty scholars endowed with wisdom and the power of God.

THE SARDISEAN CHURCH AGE (A.D. 1520 to A.D. 1750) STAR-MESSENGER: MARTIN LUTHER

Revelation 3: 1-6 reads: *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and **strengthen the things which remain**, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

Sardisean church age began in 1520 and ended in 1750. It is the age of what we call **“Reformation Age”**. **Sardis means a “marriage”**, the **marriage age of church and state**.



Martin Luther

The messenger to the fifth church age was **Martin Luther**. His name is so familiar to the Bible scholar, or the teacher, or the laity of today. Martin Luther was a brilliant scholar of gentle disposition. He was ordained as an Augustinian priest at Erfurt. Luther saw the futility of the Roman church's imposed works that were to bring salvation. The Word of God struck home to his heart, and was convinced that **“The just shall live by faith.”** That was Luther's message - **justification by faith**. Luther was a mighty preacher and teacher of the Word, and insisted especially in his first years of public eminence, that the Word was the sole criterion. Thus he was against works as a means of salvation and baptism as a means of regeneration. He taught the mediation of Christ apart from man as was the original and Pentecostal concept. He was a man given to much prayer and had learned that the more work he had to do, and the more sorely he was pressed for time, the more of his time he gave to God in prayer in order to ensure satisfactory results. It is recorded of Dr. Martin Luther in Sauer's History Vol. 3, page 406 that he was, "a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues, interpreter, in one person, endowed with all nine gifts of the Spirit."

When Leo X become pope, and John Tetzel came to sell indulgences for sin in Luther's time, Luther had no choice but to rise up against this anti-Scriptural teaching. First, he thundered from the pulpit against it and then wrote his famous **95 theses** which on **October 31, 1517** he nailed to the door of Castle Church at Wittenberg, Germany, exposing and protesting the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. From that date the Reformation set in; and the reformation fires begin to fly. He protested the abuses of the Catholic church and its **mass** saying, "Is this be the holy body of Christ? It's a wafer and a little wine." And whammy, he threwed it on the floor. Martin Luther spearheaded the Reformation Age by printing Bibles. This was also the time when Guterberg invented the printing press.

As Luther crystallized the doctrine of **justification** by faith in this age, the Catholic Church held on to works, penance, prayers and other unscriptural means. We see in this historical age that the pagan worship of Sardis was the worship of the woman. It is Cybele alone, not Cybele and Deoius. The mother has literally taken the place of the Son, endowed with the merits of Godhead. And as the freed Christians glorified the Son in this era, the Roman Catholics increased their deification of Mary.

THE PHILADELPHIAN CHURCH AGE (A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1906) STAR-MESSENGER: JOHN WESLEY

Revelation 3: 7-13 states: *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: **behold, I have set before thee an open door**, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. **Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, [which is] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and [I will write upon him] my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*



John Wesley

The sixth church age is called the **Philadelphian Church Age**. The Philadelphian Church Age lasted from 1750 to about 1906. This age, due to the meaning of the name of the city, has been called The Age of **Brotherly Love**, as Philadelphia means, "love of brethren". This age was a **great missionary age** and an **“open door age”**. And the reward for this age was a pillar, and the revelation of three Names: the Name of God, the Name of the City of God, and God's New name."

The star or the messenger to this church age, we believe, solemnly, with all of our heart, to be **John Wesley**. **John Wesley**, a little Anglican man from over in England, that belonged to the Anglican church, saw the light on the Gospel. It was the hour for that Philadelphian age to come forth. And when he did, **he preached the second works of grace, a sanctification by the Blood of Jesus**.

Christ.

John Wesley was born at Epworth, June 17, 1703 and was one of **nineteen**

children born to **Samuel and Susanna Wesley**. His father was a chaplain in the Church of England; but it is more than likely that the religious turn of John's mind was based more upon his mother's exemplary life than upon his father's theology. John was a brilliant scholar. He drew up a spiritual guide of works, such as giving to the poor, visiting the sick and the imprisoned. For this they were called **Methodists**, and other derisive titles. John Wesley traveled multiple thousands of miles as did his circuit riders who carried the Gospel near and far. In fact Wesley traveled 4500 miles per year by horse. He was a believer in the power of God and he prayed for the sick with great faith and wonderful results. Many of his meetings saw the manifestation of Spiritual gifts. Wesley never did desire to build a work upon a denominational or sectarian basis. Though he was an Arminian in his beliefs, he did not want to separate himself from brethren on the grounds of doctrine. He was a good candidate for James: He based his eternal life on faith and works, or the living of the life, rather than simply accepting a creed or a doctrinal statement.

THE LAODICEAN CHURCH AGE (A.D. 1906 - Rapture) STAR-MESSENGER: WILLIAM BRANHAM

Our age is the fulfillment of Revelation 3: 14-22: **"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and [that] the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."**

The **Laodicean Age** began around the turn of the 20th Century, perhaps 1906. The name, **Laodicea**, means, "**people's rights**" or "**justice of the peoples.**" There never was an age like the 20th century wherein we see all nations rising up and demanding equality, socially and financially. Our age, the Laodicean church age, is an age of the communists where all men are supposedly equal, though it is only so in theory. This is the age of political parties who call themselves Christian Democrats, and Christian Socialists, Christian Commonwealth Federation, etc. and the age of labor unions, women's rights, gay rights, and other cause-oriented groups.

In every attribute, ancient Laodicea is found reborn in the 20th Laodicean Age. Historic Laodicea was a rich city, endowed by the wealthy. It was full of culture. Science abounded. How like today. The churches are rich. The worship is beautiful and formal, but cold and dead. Culture and education have taken the place of the Spirit-given Word, and faith has been superseded by science, so that man is a victim of materialism. Frequent earthquakes finally caused Laodicea's complete abandonment.

The messenger to the Laodicean Age, according to Scriptures, is going to be a prophet. He will have the prophetic ministry. It will be based solidly on the Word because



William Branham

when he prophesies or has a vision, it will always be "Word oriented" and it will ALWAYS come to pass. He will be vindicated as a prophet because of his accuracy. The proof that he is a prophet is found in **Revelation 10:7** **"But in the days of the voice of the seventh messenger when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished as He hath declared to His servants, the prophets."** This one here in Revelation 10:7 is the seventh age messenger and it is a man, and he is to bring a message from God, and his message and ministry is going to finish the mystery of God as declared to His servants, the prophets. That is what Paul was in the first age, and the last age has one, too. **Amos 3:6-7**, **"Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants, the prophets."**

It was in the end-time period that the **seven thunders** of Jesus will come forth. **Revelation 10:3-4**, **"And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."** What was in those thunders no one knows. **But we need to know.** And it will take a **prophet** to get the revelation because God has no other way of bringing out His Scriptural revelations except by a prophet. This messenger of **Malachi 4** and **Revelation 10:7** is going to do **two things**. One: According to Malachi 4 he will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers. Two: **He will reveal the mysteries of the seven thunders in Revelation 10** which are the **revelations contained in the seven seals**. It will be these Divinely revealed 'mystery-truths' that literally turn the hearts of the children to the Pentecostal fathers.

Not only do we see this messenger coming here in Revelation 10:7, but we find that the Word speaks of Elijah coming before Jesus returns. In **Matthew 17:10**, **"And His disciples asked Him saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" And Jesus said, "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things."** Before the coming of our Lord, Elijah must come back for a work of restoration in the church. This is what **Malachi 4:5** says, **"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord; and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."**

After an in-depth evaluation of all the men of God that has evangelized the world in our age, none of the rest can compare to the life and ministry of William Branham, a seer and a prophet of God to our generation. William Branham, this writer believes, is the angel-messenger to the Laodicean Church Age.

The **Full Gospel Men's Voice**, (now, Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International), in its February 1961 issue wrote about William Branham: **"In Bible Days, there were men of God who were Prophets and Seers. But in all the Sacred Records, none of these had a greater ministry than that of William Branham, a Prophet and Seer of God, whose photograph appears on the front cover of this issue of Full Gospel Men's Voice. Branham has been used by God, in the Name of Jesus, to raise the dead!"**

One historian of that movement stated that **William Branham** was "a prophet to our generation", and a Pentecostal Historian wrote, "Branham filled the largest stadiums and meeting halls in the world." On **June 11, 1933**, while William Branham was baptizing the 17th person amongst hundreds of converts in the **Ohio River** near Jeffersonville, Indiana, a bright fiery Light suddenly appeared over him and a voice spoke out, **"As John the Baptist was sent to forerun the first coming of Jesus Christ, so are you sent to forerun His second coming!"**

The next edition of the Jeffersonville Evening News reported and published the incident with the subheading, "Mysterious Star Appears Over Minister While Baptizing".

In May of 1946, as William Branham prayed alone late one night, an angel of light appeared to him, saying, "Do not fear. I am sent from the presence of Almighty God to tell you that your peculiar birth and misunderstood life has been to indicate that you are to take a gift of Divine healing to the peoples of the world. If you will be sincere when you pray and can get the people to believe you, nothing shall stand before your prayer, not even cancer. You will go into many parts of the earth and will pray for kings and rulers and potentates. You will preach to multitudes the world over and thousands will come to you for counsel." This was literally fulfilled in the years that followed, for his ministry took him around the world seven times and many individuals of public influence, including Congressman Upshaw of the U.S.A. and King George VI of England, were healed as a result of his prayers.

To know more in-depthly about the Seven Church Ages, I advice you to read the Book entitled "AN EXPOSITION OF THE SEVEN CHURCH AGES," by William Marrison Branham.

