



has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22 NIV). The messages to the seven churches of Revelation all conclude with the above statement. This indicates that the message is for **“everyone”** who will **“listen to”** the word of God, the Bible **(ISV)**. But how is the modern church pictured in the Bible?

Confusing Situation of the Modern Church

Why is Christianity so confusing? Why are there so many diverse groups in Christianity today? Is there only one true Christian religion, group, or denomination, that has God’s special favor, and who are in a “spiritual paradise,” the modern day, one and only, “ark of salvation,” whereas others who are not part of this group are outside of God’s favor, and thus in spiritual darkness? If so, does this one special group contain all the true Christians within it? Or, are individual genuine Christians scattered throughout many diverse groups? Since beliefs and practices among various Christian groups vary widely, and this has caused much **“confusion” (Galatians 1:7 NIV)**, these are questions that need Biblical answers.

We, at this website, do not think that we know everything. We don’t! **“Things hidden belong to Yahweh our God, but things revealed are ours . . . so that we can put all the words of this law into practice” (Deuteronomy 29:29 NJB)**. Some things are clearly “revealed” in the Bible, and some are not. However, even with all that is “revealed” in the Bible, we still do not have perfect understanding, but strive to **“grow in the . . .**

knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18 NIV).

Christ And The Seven Churches of Revelation

The following study Bible note about **“the seven churches” (Revelation 1:20)** of Revelation 2 & 3 is quite helpful in this regard:

“The seven churches addressed in chaps. 2 and 3 were actual churches of John’s day. But they also represent types and conditions of churches in all generations. This idea is supported by the fact that only seven were selected out of all the many that existed and flourished in John’s time and by the statement at the close of each letter that the Spirit was speaking to the churches (vv. 7,11, etc.”— Ryrie Study Bible note on Revelation 2:1

Although it is claimed by some that the seven churches represent different so-called “church ages,” there is no evidence, Biblical, or otherwise, that this is so. As stated above, the seven churches apparently represent “types and conditions of churches in each generation,” including ours. John was inspired to write:

“Write down what you have seen-both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen”—Revelation 1:19 NLT

This scripture applies to the entire book of Revelation, as well as it seems to apply to what he wrote to the seven churches. **“The revelation” is “made . . . known through symbols” (Revelation 1:1 HCSB; HCSB marginal reading).** The scriptures tell us that Jesus’ **“eyes [are] like a fiery flame” (Revelation 1:14; 19:12 HCSB),** in a symbolic sense, meaning that he sees and knows everything that is going on at all times in the church, because he is **“in the middle of the lampstands,” “the seven lampstands are the seven churches” (Revelation 1:13,20 NLT),** and also why he could say the following to each church:

“I know”—Revelation 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15

“This repeated refrain . . . shows Christ’s total knowledge of his people, their activities, and their circumstances”—NLT Study Bible note on Revelation 2:2,3

Christianity today, as in the past, has many problems, some obvious, and some not so obvious. History also tells us that some who have claimed to be Christians have done some very evil things, often in the name of God, and taught **“false doctrines” (1 Timothy 1:3; 4:7; Titus 1:14)**, all of which was predicted in the New Testament (**Acts 20:29,30; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; 1 Peter 2:1-3**). Some of this was already happening back in the first century. For example, **“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good” (Titus 1:16 NIV)**. Jesus said, **“By their fruits you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:16 NIV)**. Some actions and some who claim to be Christians are quite obviously not Christian. Others are not so entirely clear. Therefore, it seems best to apply the principle, **“judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes” (1 Corinthians 4:5 NIV)**, to many, but not all, things.

All True Christians Not In One Special Group

Jesus gave two parables that help to understand the long-term situation, or picture, of the Christian church:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. ‘The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat

with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn . . . The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil”—Matthew 13:24-30,39-41 NIV

“The refusal of the householder to allow his slaves to separate the wheat from the weeds while they are still growing is a warning to the disciples not to attempt to anticipate the final judgment of God by a definitive exclusion of sinners from the kingdom. In its present stage it is composed of the good and the bad. The judgment of God alone will eliminate the sinful. Until then there must be patience and the preaching of repentance”—NAB note on Matthew 13:24-30

“The young weeds and the young blades of wheat look the same and can’t be distinguished until they are grown and ready for harvest. Weeds (unbelievers) and wheat (believers) must live side by side in this world. God allows unbelievers to remain for a while, just as a farmer allows weeds to remain in his field so that the surrounding wheat isn’t uprooted with them. At the harvest, however, the weeds will be uprooted and thrown away. God’s harvest (judgment) of all people is coming. We are to make ourselves ready by making sure that our faith is sincere”—Life Application Study Bible note on Matthew 13:30

“At the end of the world, angels will separate the evil from the good. There are true and false believers in churches today, but we should be cautious in our judgments because only Christ is qualified to make the final separation. If you start judging, you may damage some of the good ‘plants.’ It’s more important to judge our own response to God than to analyze others’ responses”—Life Application Study Bible note on Matthew 13:40-43.

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake

and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”—Matthew 13:47-50 NIV

“The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and the weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who is part of the kingdom and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we are”—Life Application Study Bible note on Matthew 13:47-50

“Similar to the parable of the wheat and the tares. Both genuine and professing people will coexist in the kingdom, to be separated at the end of the age”—Ryrie Study Bible note on Matthew 13:47-50

“Lest the impression be given that the church of Jesus is made up only of true disciples, the explanation of the parable of the weeds among the wheat (Mt 13:37-43), as well as the parable of the net thrown into the sea ‘which collects fish of every kind’ (Mt 13:47-50), shows that it is composed of both the righteous and the wicked, and that separation between the two will be made only at the time of the final judgment”—NAB introduction to the Gospel According to Matthew

Therefore, wheat like and weed like Christians are not separated, but are mixed together until the final judgment. All the wheat like Christians are not in one special group.

However, we need to keep in mind what Jesus said, **“How narrow the gate and constricted the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few” (Matthew 7:14 NAB). “Only a few people [will] be saved” (Luke 13:24 NIV).**

However, Jesus said, **“Let them grow together until harvest” (Matthew 13:30 NAB). “The earth” is not “harvested” until the end (Revelation 14:14-16 NAB).**

But, what about the assertion made by some that there is only one exclusive group of true Christians?

“John said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons. but we told him to stop because he wasn’t in our group.’ ‘Don’t stop him!’ Jesus said. ‘No one who performs a miracle in my name will soon be able to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us’”—Mark 9:38-41 NLT

Jesus’ “followers will not all resemble each other or belong to the same groups. People who are on Jesus’ side have the same goal of building up the kingdom of God, and they should not let their differences interfere with this goal. Those who share a common faith should cooperate. People don’t have to be like us to be following Jesus with us”—Life Application Study Bible note on Mark 9:38-41

“Jesus warns against . . . intolerance toward others , , , who do not follow us. The saying in Mk 9:40 is a broad principle of the divine tolerance”—NAB note on Mark 9:38-41

The New Testament does not indicate that all genuine Christians would be contained within one group, but would be scattered among somewhat diverse groups.

“Two men had stayed back in the camp . . . The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. These began to prophesy in the camp. A young man ran to tell Moses this. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ Joshua . . . said, ‘My lord Moses, stop them!’ Moses replied, ‘Are you jealous on my account? If only all Yahweh’s people were prophets, and Yahweh had given them his spirit!’”—Numbers 11:26-29 NJB

“This incident is similar to a story told in [Mark 9:38-41](#). The disciples wanted Jesus to forbid others to drive out demons because they were not part of the disciples’ group. But this type of narrow attitude was condemned by both Moses and Jesus. Beware of putting limits on God—he can work through whomever he chooses”—Life Application Study Bible note on [Numbers 11:26-29](#)

John 9:38 and **Numbers 11:26-29** thus provide further evidence that not all wheat like, or genuine, Christians are in the same group or organization.

Back in the 1st century, **“the faith was once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” (Jude 3 NIV)** in the form of **“All scripture . . . inspired by God . . . to prepare and equip his people to do every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16,17 NLT)**. By this means, **“the Spirit of truth”** has **“guid[ed]”** his people **“into all the truth” (John 16:13 NIV)**.

The Bible is complete and does not need to be supplemented. All the truth we need is in the scriptures, without anything added to it, and without the need for intermediaries. The Bible is available to most people today. Why is supplementation or intermediaries not needed.?

Jesus has **“purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation”** and has **“made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God” (Revelation 5:9,10 NIV)**. The priesthood of the believer means that each Christian can have his/her relationship with God, without eliminating the need for **“the church” (Ephesians 3:10)**.

But, since there is **“confusion” (Galatians 1:7 NIV)** about Christianity today, let’s look at some the conditions that existed in the seven churches of [Revelation 2 & 3](#) in the first century, and that also serve as a forecast of the then future state of the church, even down till today. In doing so, the conditions the Bible mentioned describe some of Christianity, that is, some groups and individuals, but not all. Conditions vary across Christianity in the modern

church. But, we must keep in mind that **“only a few people [will] be saved” (Luke 13:24 NIV).**

How The Seven Churches Picture The Modern Church

Revelation 2:2 - “I have seen your hard work” (NLT). Some Christians work hard in the Lord’s work.

Revelation 2:2 - “You cannot tolerate wicked people” (NIV). While Christian meetings should be open to all, Church membership should not be open to those who don’t live by God’s standards in the Bible. Some Churches follow the example of the Ephesian church, but many do not.

Revelation 2:2 - “You have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false” (NIV); “Impostors” (NAB) - Some, even leaders, are not genuine Christians in the modern church. Some churches reject unqualified people as leaders.

Revelation 2:3 - “You have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary” (NAB). While all true Christians suffer and endure it for Christ’s name, some suffer and endure much more than others.

Revelation 2:4 - With some Christian groups and individuals there is a noticeable lack of **“love.”**

Revelation 2:6,15 - “the Nicolaitans” - The modern church is rife with sectarianism and **“divisions” (1 Corinthians 1:10),** which cause much confusion and many problems.

Revelation 2:9,10 - “afflictions . . . poverty” (NIV) - Some Christians endure under very harsh and miserable conditions, including extreme poverty and persecution, even to the point of **“prison”** and **“death.”**

Revelation 2:9 - **“Slander of those who say they are [spiritual] Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (NIV)** - False Christians, both individually and as groups, cause many problems for true Christians today in the modern church .

Revelation 2:9 - **“Yet you are rich!” (NIV)** - Some Christians are spiritually rich, **“rich in good works” (1 Timothy 6:18 NAB)**, for example.

Revelation 2:10 - **“The devil will put some of you into prison to test you. Be faithful, even to the point of death” (NIV)** - Some Christians are **“tested” (NAB)**, by being mistreated, even imprisoned for their faith, and some are even killed for their faith.

Revelation 2:13 - **“You live where Satan’s throne is, and yet you hold fast to my name and have not denied your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was martyred among you, where Satan lives” (NAB)** - Some Christians live where nationalism, paganism, or even apostate Christianity, is very influential, even extreme, and come under tremendous pressure to conform to nationalistic practices, and the world. Some Christians endure such pressures and persecutions faithfully, no matter how severely they are mistreated.

Revelation 2:14 - **“Teaching is like that of Balaam . . . taught them to sin by . . . idols and by sexual sin” (NLT)** -**“False doctrines” (1 Timothy 1:3)** and practices, brought into, and fused into, Christianity, are very prevalent and pervasive in the modern church. Some of the most notable ones are the Trinity, immortality of the soul, and hellfire. Some Christians are misled by false teachers and denominations who teach, believe, practice or tolerate false teachings, such as idolatry and sexual sin, violations of God’s moral laws. For example, nationalistic symbols and practices brought into the church are a form of idolatry, which is widely practiced today in the modern church.

Revelation 2:15 - **“Those who hold to there teaching of the Nicolaitans” (NIV)**
- There are many prominent sectarian denominations that **“teach man-made**

ideas” and “tradition” which “cancel the word of God” (Mark 7:7,8,13 NLT). “False doctrines” are ‘held to’, or have a tight grip on, many denominations and individual Christians in the modern church.

Revelation 2:19 - “Your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance . . . your constant improvement in all these things” (NLT) - Some Christians are very faithful, loving, rendering service to others, enduring problems, and continually improving.

Revelation 2:20 - “You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, who teaches and misleads my servants to play the harlot and . . . idols” (NAB) - Some modern “Christian” religions, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Christian Scientists, are based largely on the teachings of women. Others have women in leadership positions. This is the Jezebel tolerance, and is condemned by Jesus. According to the Bible, women are not allowed to teach or hold authority over men in the church (**1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:9,10**). ‘Playing the harlot’ could be spiritual and/or physical fornication. When churches adopt pagan beliefs and practices, they are ‘playing the harlot,’ spiritually. “Idols” in churches would obviously be the allowing, or tolerance, of any literal idols, but it could also be the allowance of other less obvious idols, such as nationalistic ideas, symbols and practices within the church.

Revelation 2:24 - “The deep secrets of Satan” (NJB) - While most reject spiritistic practices, some have allowed various forms of spiritism into the church.

Revelation 2:24,25 - “I will not impose any other burden on you, except to hold on to what you have until I come” (NIV). Modern Christians who reject false teachings and practices, and “hold on to” Jesus and his true teachings won’t have “any other burden” imposed on them, “except to what you have until I come”.

Revelation 3:1 - “Have the reputation for being alive, but you are dead” (NIV) - Many churches in the overall modern church are spiritually dead, although the world in

general cannot see it.

Revelation 3:2 - “I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God”

(NAB) - Many Christians in the modern church are not fully involved in their Christian life. For many, Christianity is not only not the main focus of their lives, being only secondary, they are Christians in name only.

Revelation 3:4 - “There are a few . . . who have kept their robes unstained” - (NJB)

- A few Christians have remained pure and holy before God, in harmony with Jesus’ statement that only a “few” will find the road to eternal life (**Matthew 7:13,14; Luke 13:23,24**).

Revelation 3:8,10 (NAB) - “I have left an open door before you, which no one can close.” Jesus always makes a way so that the gospel can be spread, no matter what the conditions are. **“You have limited strength, and you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”** Some Christians in the modern church have very limited physical, and/or financial strength, and/or are under severe persecution, and, yet, they are very faithful and bold in their Christianity, because they have **“kept [Jesus’] message about endurance.”**

Revelation 3:16,17,19 - “You are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold” - (NAB) - Some Christians are so willfully “lukewarm” in their faith that Jesus says he will **“vomit [them] out of his mouth” (NKJV; NASB)**. Why are many only lukewarm in the modern church? They may be materially **“rich and affluent and [think they] have no need of anything [spiritually, but they] do not realize that [they] are wretched, pitiable, poor, and naked [spiritually, and need to] . . . repent” (NAB)**. Many churches and denominations **“are lukewarm”** themselves, and do not actively encourage modern Christians to **“Be wholehearted” (Revelation 3:19 REB)** in their Christianity.

As we can see from the scriptures, there is a mixture of diverse individuals in the modern

church today, as well as a great diversity of conditions within the churches themselves. The scriptures do not seem to indicate that all genuine Christians are contained within one group or organization, but are scattered across Christianity. While, we, at this website, do not know everything, the scriptures help to try to make some sense out the somewhat confusing situation that exists with Christianity and the modern church.