

The Church in the End Times

Week #3 – Letters to Pergamum and Thyatira

Seeking the blessing promised to those who read these words, hear them and take them to heart. Rev. 1:3



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Assignment for Week 3

- **For this week I hope you read Revelation chapters 1-3, and Daniel chapter 9**
- **Review suggested reading chart on next page and consider reading for background on these two churches or reading ahead.**

Suggested Reading

- **Week 2:**
 - Ephesus: Acts 18-20; Ephesians 3; 5
 - Smyrna: Acts 15
- **Week 3:**
 - Pergamos: Num 22-24; Balaam, Num 33; Acts 15; 1 Cor 6
 - Thyatira: 1 Kgs 16; 21; Jezebel, Naboth's vineyard; 2 Kgs 9:36
- **Week 4:**
 - Sardis: Galatians; Romans
 - Philadelphia: Thessalonians
- **Week 4/5:**
 - Laodicea: Colossians

Agenda for This Week

- Review of what we covered last week
- The Church at Pergamum – The Worldly Church (Bride of the World)
- The Church at Thyatira – The Tolerant Church

Review from Last Week

- The Seven Churches
- Analysis of the general structure of the letters
- The Church at Ephesus – Love Grown Cold
- The Church at Smyrna – Purified by Persecution

Intro to the 7 Letters to 7 Churches

- They were written to 7 real churches
- They have a very regular structure – but the differences are intriguing
- They have several apparent levels of meaning
 - Local, pragmatic level
 - Each church had specific issues
 - Every church can see itself in all the letters
 - Prophetic history of the Church filling the gap from Acts to the Rapture
 - More speculative, not universally accepted, and it seems to fit only the western church
 - This can be helpful in understanding the role of the Church in the end times.
 - We'll study more about this later.

Seven Churches, Described and Identified

	Ephesus 2:1-7	Smyrna 2:8-11	Pergamum 2:12-17	Thyatira 2:18-29	Sardis 3:1-6	Philadelphia 3:7-13	Laodicea 3:14-22
Period described	The early church, to AD 100	The church under pagan persecution, to 313	Paganism enters the church, to 500s	Papal supremacy of Dark Ages, to mid 1500s	Protestant reformation and fossilization, to late 1700s	Awakening, Bible printed and studied, to mid 1800s	The end-time church, content but sinful, to End.
Opening	To the angel of the church . . . write						
Description of Christ	Holds 7 stars, walks among 7 lampstands	First and Last, Died and came to life	The One with two-edged sword	Eyes of fire, feet like brass; searches minds	Holds 7 spirits and 7 stars	Holy, true, holds keys, opens and shuts	Amen, true witness, Beginning of creation
What Christ knows	Works, labor patience	Works, trials, poverty; blasphemy of false Jews	Works, living where Satan's throne is	More works, love, service, faith, patience	Works, (and see "What you have")	Works	Works: neither cold nor hot
Commendation	Tested false prophets, perseverance	Rich in spite of poverty	Held to My name & faith (see above) even in time of martyr		Have a few names undefiled (later)	Kept command to persevere	
Rebuke	Left first love		Ones with doctrine of Balaam	Jezebel with immorality permitted	Works imperfect		Lukewarm, wretched, blind, naked
Counsel	Remember, repent, do first works	Do not fear suffering	Repent	Hold fast till I come	Watch, strengthen remainder	Hold fast, preserve crown	Buy gold, clothes, eye ointment
Warning	Lampstand will be removed		Will fight with sword of mouth	Jezebel into sickbed, children killed	I will come as thief if you do not watch		I will spit you out; rebuke and punishment
What you have	My hatred for Nicolaitans	Tribulation coming	Also have ones with Nicolaitans doctrine	Rest do not have false doctrine, not Satanic depths	A name as alive, but dead (and see above)	A little strength, My word and name	Not what you think you have
Reward for overcomers	Eat from tree of life	Not hurt by second death	Hidden manna, white stone	Power over nations; morning star	Clothed in white, name in book, confessed	Made pillar, inscribed with new name	Sit on my throne
Other promises	Eternal life to ones faithful to death			Rest are given no other burden	Undefiled ones will walk in white	Submission of false Jews; Kept from hour of trial	Eat with those who open door
Closing	Listen to what the Spirit says to the churches						

Can you remember what each name means and what each letter's theme is?

Provided by Jane Willard

<http://www.bibleexplained.com/revelation/r-seg01-3/rev03c-smaller-table.html>

Map of the Seven Churches



Found at: <http://oelberg.info/Smyrna.htm>

Review of Ephesus – When Love Grows Cold

- The word “Ephesus” means darling
- *“I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance and that you cannot tolerate evil men”*
 - This is a good church, a strong church, a church that works and doesn’t grow weary
 - They have good doctrine and listened to Paul when he warned them in Acts 20
- *But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first*
 - Remember
 - Repent
 - Repeat
- What can we learn
 - The only two churches that did not have sin were the persecuted church and the evangelizing church
 - This is the beginning of all the other problems that churches can have
 - It’s easy to overlook this because of all the good stuff being done – but for whom is it being done?

Review of Smyrna – Purified by Persecution

- **Smyrna = myrrh, a fragrant ointment produced from a thorny bush that gets crushed to release its fragrance, used for embalming**
 - Domitian was cracking down on Christians. It's recorded that "atheist" Christians were being executed en masse in Smyrna.
- **Jesus' title: *"The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life"***
 - Speaks of his death and his overcoming of death
- ***'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich),***
 - Every church has a misunderstanding of how they were really doing
 - Jesus had no correction or condemnation, only encouragement and praise
- ***Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'***
- **What can we learn**
- **Persecution always purifies a church**
- **We don't need to seek it out – it will find us.**
- **Are we more like the Smyrna church, standing when the world persecutes us, or more like the next church that comes along with the world system and values?**

The Church at Pergamum

“The Worldly Church”

Message to the the Church at Pergamum

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’

Opening to Pergamum

- *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:*
 - “Pergamum” means perverse or mixed marriage
 - It was a center of Caesar worship and had the first temple erected to Caesar
 - There were many other deities worshipped here so it was a hotbed of pagan worship and revelry
- Jesus’ title: *“The One who has the sharp two-edged sword”*
 - This is not a comforting image like the first two
 - The sharp two-edged sword speaks of judgment
 - The sword is also the word of God (Eph. 6:17, Heb. 4:12)
 - Perhaps the word of God wasn’t being given in this church and when it did come it would cut in both directions

The Report Card – What They Did Well

- ***‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is’***
 - Yikes - tough spot they’re in, a church where there was such a concentration of demonic power
 - Satan’s throne is clearly on Earth, not heaven, and Jesus indicates that this area was his focus
 - Jesus understands their plight.
- ***“...and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”***
 - They held fast to the name of Jesus
 - Like Ephesus, they had endured for the name of Jesus
 - They had issues similar to those that faced Smyrna
- **How did Pergamum respond to the persecution?**

The Answer: Not Very Well

- **“...you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.”**
 - So what did Balaam do (Numbers 22-24)?
 - A true prophet of God, he was corrupted by greed.
 - Balak paid him to curse the Israelites in battle. God prevented him.
 - In chapter 24 Balaam drops out of the story with no apparent solution.
 - The next chapter describes the Israelites' sin at Peor, prostituting with Moab.
 - In chapter 31, Balaam is killed and we learn of his plot with Balak. He failed to understand God's grace.
- **“So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”**
 - Ephesus opposed the Nicolaitans but now it's inside the church
 - The pagan revelry outside the church was now being embraced by some (in the same way as Balaam).
 - Satan couldn't overcome the church by sending bad teachers or by persecuting them so now he's working on the inside.

The Remedy

- ***“Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”***
 - Remember what he said to the Ephesian church: repent, remember and do what you did at the beginning. If they didn’t repent he would remove their lampstand.
 - Here they can’t return to what they did before and if they don’t repent, Jesus will make war against them.
 - Repent: 1 John 1:9 says Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us.

The Closing

- ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***
 - Is it those who will repent who have the ears to hear? Let's labor to have ears to hear
- ***“To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”***
- **What does this stone represent?**
 - **From the local culture**
 - Could be the stone by which jurors cast their vote for conviction or acquittal
 - There was an Asiatic deity worshipped in Pergamum that was symbolized by a black stone
 - Tessera stone that was given to the victor in the athletic games
 - **From the Bible**
 - The first several mentions of stone are to indicate a good thing from God:
 - Ge 2:12 - The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.
 - Ge 11:3 - They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.
 - Ge 28:18 - So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top.
 - Daniel: The stone cut out but not by human hands
 - Jesus: the rock of stumbling
 - **It is obviously something private and special from Jesus Christ**

What Can We Learn from Pergamum?

- **We live in an area like Pergamum – full of revelry and idolatry**
 - Any church can be tempted avoid pressure from the world by adopting it's practices
 - Believers can “just go along” at work or social situations and compromise their values
 - James 4:4 - You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
 - In Acts 15, gentile believers were told NOT to eat meat sacrificed to idols to keep them separate from the unbelievers
- **Even Balaam was a man who heard from God but was corrupted by his desire for wealth or the things of the world**
 - Some Christians claim that they have grace to indulge in sex outside of marriage. False grace tinges many.
 - It's not just gross greed or immorality. How have you been tainted by the world's values?
- **Jesus called Pergamum to repent. Otherwise it will have disastrous consequences**
 - Remember Annanias and Saphira – and the believers in Corinth who committed the sin unto death
- **Consider the downward spiral**
 - The wonderful church at Ephesus was strong on doctrine but lost its first love
 - The persecuted church was pure but at what cost? Would you choose purity if it meant persecution?
 - The church at Pergamum married the world and became entangled in the practices of sinful pagans.

The Church at Thyatira

The Tolerant Church

Message to the the Church at Thyatira

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

19 ‘ I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Opening to Thyatira

- The city of Thyatira was dominated by trade guilds
 - Each guild had a patron deity
 - They required obeisance to the pagan deity
 - To work in a craft or profession, you needed to belong to the guild
- The names of the city are instructive
 - An earlier name, Semiramis, is the name of Nimrod's wife and Queen of Babylon (cf "Jezebel in v. 20, Queen of Heaven in Roman Catholic idolatry and the woman who rides the beast in Rev. 17)
 - Nicator, upon hearing that he had been borne a daughter, named it "Thyatira" which sounds like the Greek word for daughter (again a reference to Jezebel?)
 - "Thyatira" also appears to mean "continual sacrifice", perhaps a reference to the Roman Catholic Eucharist where they believe that Christ is continually sacrificed for our sins.
- The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:
 - Flame of fire and burnished bronze
 - Bronze and fire are symbols of judgment
 - From Exodus 27 on, bronze is used because it can withstand fire.
 - Jesus is coming to judge this church.

The Report Card – What They Did Well

- **‘ I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.’**
 - Jesus starts with the good stuff. He knows them. They did a lot of good.
 - Love, faith, service, perseverance – sounds pretty good so far, and they got better with time.
 - The greatest commandment – love
 - Their faith wasn’t dead – they had services
 - They held on like the previous churches
 - Wouldn’t we like to hear this about our church?

You tolerate this woman Jezebel...



Recognize her anybody?

You tolerate this woman Jezebel...



The woman who rides the beast from Rev. 17

What does Jezebel Reference Tell Us?

- *“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.”*
 - She calls herself a prophetess – she obviously isn’t speaking on the Lord’s behalf.
 - 1 Timothy 2:12 warns about a woman having authority over a man.
 - Matthew 18:6 warns about leading little ones who believe in Jesus astray.
 - Now there is a leader inside the church who is advocating the sins that were coming in as an influence from outside the Pergamum church
- **What can we learn from the Jezebel of 1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 9?**
 - As a priestess of Baal she married evil, weak-willed King Ahab of Israel
 - She killed the true prophets
 - She introduced harlotry and idolatry into the kingdom of Israel
 - She used corrupt power to seize control of land that didn’t belong to her (Naboth’s vineyard, 1 Ki 21:7) cf. the Papal States

What does Jezebel Reference Tell Us?

- ***“21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.”***
 - She heard the call to repentance, perhaps from those in v. 24 who did not hold to her teachings. She did not repent
- ***“22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with pestilence,”***
 - The decision seems to have already been made. It is too late for the woman Jezebel and her disciples
- ***“...and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”***
 - The (Roman Catholic) church is not the source of truth and grace. All the churches will know that it is Jesus personally who determines this.

Encouragement for the Remnant

- ***“24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.”***
 - This woman was calling her deeds the deep things of Satan – Wow!
 - Was it a message of false grace or the duality of the material/spiritual world (Gnosticism) that let this lie be told?
 - A remnant had not soiled their clothes.
- ***“25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.”***
 - Still they had to hold fast or they could get swept away into great tribulation
 - Note the coming of Jesus is specifically mentioned

Closing

- *“26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations
“27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*
 - Authority... rod of iron. Jesus promises to the overcomer who does hold fast exactly what the Roman pontiffs of the Middle Ages sought so vigorously, to rule over nations.
 - This means the church will be ruling with Jesus (Psalm 2:9)
 - This is the millennial kingdom (Rev. 19:15 – 20:6). It's the only way this makes sense.
- The morning star is Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:16)

What We Learn from Thyatira

- **Consider the downward spiral**
 - The wonderful church at Ephesus was strong on doctrine but lost its first love. If they don't repent they will lose their church.
 - The persecuted church was pure but at what cost? Would you choose purity if it meant persecution?
 - The church at Pergamum married the world and became entangled in the practices of sinful pagans. Jesus will fight against this church unless they repent.
 - The church at Thyatira now has a woman in the church teaching idolatry and fornication. Jesus will kill the reprobates and cast the church into (the) great tribulation unless they repent. Only a remnant will be saved.
- **Avoid the sins of Thyatira**
 - ***Don't tolerate evil in the church***
 - Do not tolerate sin. Are we tolerant of sin because we don't want to be judgmental?
 - Matthew 18:15 – "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.
 - 1 Cor 5:6 – not even a little bit of leaven
 - ***...Not even a hint of immorality (Eph. 5:3, NIV)***
 - How many of us could honestly say that there is not even a hint of immorality in us?
 - ***Idolatry***
 - 1 Sam 15:33 – "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you..."
 - ***Don't get sucked into a false attitude or teaching***
 - Every church, in some way, makes void the word of God by its traditions (Mt. 15:6). Strive to be like the overcomers in Thyatira that did not accept the false teaching.
 - Be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 who tested everything by the Word.

Prophetic Viewpoint

- **This letter is full of imagery that typified the Roman Catholic church**
 - **Protestant commentators have had a field day with this**
- **The two choices are to hold onto the truth until Jesus comes (v. 24-25) or be cast into The Great Tribulation that follows the Rapture of the Church**
- **This would indicate that the woman who rides the beast, the apostate church of the tribulation, could be the Roman Catholic church (city on seven hills) in Rev. 17**

Prayer



Assignment for Next Week

- Review suggested reading chart on page 3 and consider reading for background on these two churches or reading ahead.**
- Pray as you read that the Holy Spirit will open your minds and spirit to the truth about Jesus Christ and His will for the church.**
- Pray for this class that we will bring glory to God as we seek to understand His Word.**

Backup

Notes on Bible Interpretation

From Mike Day's Class

The Interpretive Journey

Grasp the text in their town.
God's intended meaning in the
original context.

Measure the river of differences
between the biblical audience and us.

Cross the Principilizing Bridge:
What is the theological principle?

Grasp the text in our town. Application
of principles in parallel situations.

From *Grasping God's Word* by Duvall & Hays

Three Guidelines

- The Bible was God's word to someone else before it was God's word to us.
- When you want to find out what the Bible has to say, find out what the whole Bible says.
- The quality of your answers depends on the quality of your questions.

ASK: What is God up to? What does this tell me about the character of God?

Timeframe in History

- **Where Can We Place the Events of Revelation in Time?**
- **Here are some things to consider**
 - John 1 starts before the world was formed
 - Revelation 21 shows heaven and earth passing away, leading to a restoration of Paradise in ch. 22
 - The outline in 1:19 spoke of “what is now” and “what will take place later”.
 - We will see that Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the 7 letters to 7 churches.
 - These were real churches, as shown by the excavations of Sir Wm. Ramsay (1851 – 1939)
 - After the time of the churches (“the now”), the scene shifts to heaven and the “after these things” (meta tauta) starts
 - Keep that on your mind as we consider the timeframe

Theological Principles

(From Wikipedia on Hermeneutics)

- **Theological Group of Principles:**
- The **Election Principle**
- The **Historical-grammatical** principle based on historical, socio-political, geographical, cultural and linguistic / grammatical context
- The **Dispensation Principle** or The **Chronometrical Principle**: "During different periods of time, God has chosen to deal in a particular way with man in respect to sin and man's responsibility."
- The **Covenantal Principle**: "We differentiate between the various contracts that God has made with his people; specifically their provisions, their parties and their purposes."
- The **Ethnic Division Principle**: "The word of truth is rightly divided in relation to the three classes which it treats, i.e. Jews, Gentiles and the Church."
- The **Breach Principle**: Interpretation of a certain verse or passage in Scripture is aided by a consideration of certain breaches, either breaches of promise or breaches of time.
- The **Christo-Centric Principle**: "The mind of deity is eternally centered in Christ. All angelic thought and ministry are centered in Christ. All Satanic hatred and subtlety are centered at Christ. All human hopes are, and human occupations should be, centered in Christ. The whole material universe in creation is centered in Christ. The entire written word is centered in Christ."
- The **Moral Principle**
- The **Discriminational Principle**: "We should divide the word of truth so as to make a distinction where God makes a difference."
- The **Predictive Principle**
- The **Application Principle**: "An application of truth may be made only after the correct interpretation has been made"
- The **Principle of Human Willingness in Illumination**
- The **Context Principle**: "God gives light upon a subject through either near or remote passages bearing upon the same subject."
- **Sub-divided Context/Mention Principles:**
- The **First Mention Principle**: "God indicates in the first mention of a subject the truth with which that subject stands connected in the mind of God."
- The **Progressive Mention Principle**: "God makes the revelation of any given truth increasingly clear as the word proceeds to its consummation."
- The **Comparative Mention Principle**
- The **Full Mention Principle** or The **Complete Mention Principle**: "God declares his full mind upon any subject vital to our spiritual life."
- The **Agreement Principle**: "The truthfulness and faithfulness of God become the guarantee that he will not set forth any passage in his word that contradicts any other passage."
- The **Direct Statement Principle**: "God says what he means and means what he says."
- The **Gap Principle**: "God, in the Jewish Scriptures, ignores certain periods of time, leaping over them without comment."
- The **Threefold Principle**: "The word of God sets forth the truths of salvation in a three-fold way: past - justification; present - sanctification/transformation; future - glorification/consummation."
- The **Repetition Principle**: "God repeats some truth or subject already given, generally with the addition of details not before given."
- The **Synthetic Principle**
- The **Principle of Illustrative Mention**
- The **Double Reference Principle**
- **Figures of Speech Group of Principles:**
- The **Numerical Principle**
- The **Symbolic Principle**
- The **Typical Principle**: "Certain people, events, objects and rituals found in the Old Testament may serve as object lessons and pictures by which God teaches us of his grace and saving power."
- The **Parabolic Principle**
- The **Allegorical Principle**

Sub-divided Context/Mention Principles

(From Wikipedia on Hermeneutics)

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- **The Parabolic Principle**
- **The Allegorical Principle**

Past, Present and Future

(v. 19)

“Alpha — Omega”

“Things...seen”

“Beginning — End”

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

Son of Man in Heaven

“I am he that liveth”

“the things which thou
hast seen”

The 7 Churches

“I was dead”

“Behold, I am alive”
“the things which are”

The Cosmic Crisis

(After removal of true
church and before the coming
of Christ to creation)

“I have the keys of hell and
of death”
“the things about to be after
these things [*meta tauta*]”

Revelation 1
Christ in Glory

Revelation 2, 3
Church in the World

Revelation 4 — 22
Crisis in the Future

From J. Vernon McGee

The 70 Weeks of Daniel

