

# THE EPISTLES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

BY WITNESS LEE

Revelation 2 and 3 contain the seven epistles to the churches, which are the last epistles given by the Lord to His church. These seven epistles were written to seven churches in Asia; however, at that time there were more than seven churches. Why did the Lord write epistles to only these seven churches? Bible students agree that these seven churches are representative of all the churches. They are a full picture of the condition of all the churches at that time.

## A Prophecy of the Full Course of the Church

Moreover, Revelation is a book of prophecy (22:7, 18-19). Hence, what is mentioned in chapters 2 and 3 must also be in the nature of prophecy, and we must interpret the seven epistles as prophecies. In the four Gospels, the book of Acts, and the twenty-one Epistles there is no adequate prophecy concerning the course of the church on the earth. If Revelation 2 and 3 were not a prophecy of the church, there would be a gap in the New Testament. However, this gap is filled by these two chapters. The picture of the seven churches in these two chapters is a prophecy of the full course of the church during the long period from the end of the time of the apostles to the Lord's coming. In addition, if we do not understand these two chapters in the way of prophecy, they are not as meaningful. If we realize these two chapters in the way of prophecy, we will obtain their proper meaning, and they will be very meaningful.

If we compare the record of these two chapters with the facts of church history, we will realize that they correspond to one another. These seven local churches in Asia represent not only the situation of all of the churches in Asia at that time but also the seven stages of the course of the church on this earth. If we look into these seven epistles from this point of view and under this light, we will realize how meaningful and helpful they are. When we talk about the practice of the church, we all need to know and understand the seven stages of the course of the church on this earth.

Watchman Nee published twenty-four issues of a monthly paper entitled *The Christian*. Each issue contained many pages of meditations and exposition on the first three chapters of Revelation. Those twenty-four issues revolutionized the young people throughout all of Christianity in China. More than ten thousand copies of each issue were distributed throughout the country. Following this, during World War II Brother Nee conducted a study of Revelation 2 and 3 a second time in a wonderful way. I received much help from all these writings.

## The Church in Ephesus

The seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 represent the progress of the church in seven