

## THREATS TO THE CHURCH

References: Dan. 2:44; Mt. 16:18 & 28:20; Lu. 18:8; Eph. 3:21; Heb. 12:28.

The above references are scriptures which teach that nothing will ever put an end to the Lord's Church on the earth. As we have seen throughout history, His Church may cease to exist in a particular location on the earth, but the Lord's Church will always exist somewhere, until His return. Neither persecution nor death will ever be able to stamp out her existence.

That being said, there are definitely dangerous influences that could lead to, or hasten, the decline of any given local church. (Examples of local churches that no longer exist include the seven churches of Asia Minor, and in our day, churches in Madison, TN, Rossford, OH, Rossville, IL, Indianapolis, IN, & Delphi, IN.) These are the "threats" referred to in the title of this lesson, and the focus of this study.

The seven Churches of Asia Minor that were addressed in Rev. 2-3 (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia & Laodicea) had positive and negative attributes. For the latter, Jesus provided corrective warnings and remedies that needed to be pursued, if they were to continue to operate. This shows us the importance and urgency of recognizing, understanding and stopping such threats. (The list below is not necessarily a complete list, nor are the issues listed in any particular order.)

- A. Losing a supreme love for God (Ephesus & Mk. 12:30)
- B. Becoming man-led/controlled, instead of Spirit-led/controlled (III Jn. 9-10 & I Pet. 5:3)
- C. Compromising the truth by tolerating false teaching (Pergamos & II Tim. 4:3-4)
- D. Tolerating sin and situations that warrant discipline (Thyatira, I Cor. 7-13 & I Pet. 4:17)
- E. Excusing spiritual apathy (Laodicea)
- F. Abandoning loyalty to the Church and its Covenant (Mt. 24:12, II Thess. 2:3, I Tim. 3:1-5, & 4:1)
- G. Losing a burden for the lost (Amos 6:1)
- H. Failing to train the upcoming generation (Deut. 4:9 & II Tim. 2:2)

### Questions for Discussion & Study

1. What are the observable symptoms of each of the issues above?
2. Discuss why/how each of the issues above contributes to the decline of a church.
3. Why should we care if the Lord's Church continues to operate in our area?
4. What other threats exist that we have not discussed?
5. Do you think the greatest danger is from outside or inside the church? Why?
6. What is the future of a church that allows issues such as those above to continue?

### NOTES