

“CHAPTERS TWO & THREE”



The Seven Churches of Asia & The Isle of Patmos

CHAPTER TWO

Chapters 2 and 3 of the book of Revelation contain seven letters to seven literal, local churches mentioned in *Revelation 1:11*. These letters have a number applications.

First, they are seven actual letters to seven actual churches situated in seven different cities.

Second, they are letters to seven individuals within the seven churches.

Third, they are messages applicable to all churches in all ages, for the seven churches picture seven periods or stages, of church history. In each period, the Lord speaks to the churches in a judgmental way, portraying their failures, then He calls them to repentance and zealouslyness.

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1-7

The first seven verses of this Chapter contain the message to the Church at Ephesus – the church at the end of the Apostolic Age, the Church that had left its first love.

The message to the Churches (seven) represent the “Church from the age of Pentecost to the Rapture. After this age comes the tribulation. When the rapture takes place the saints will be glorified and given bodies like unto the Lord’s glorious body— ¹*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* ²*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* ³*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* (1 John 3:1–4)

Ephesus, the capital of Asia in the time when John wrote Revelation, was known as “*the light of Asia.*”

- Ephesus was capital of heathen idolatry.
- Ephesus was the stronghold of Satan’s ungodly power.
- Ephesus is the source from which idolatry spread all over the known world of that day.

Read *Acts 19*. Small silver shrines representing the great goddess Diana were bought by strangers and travelers and set up in their homes as deity to be worshiped. The huge temple of the goddess Diana was adorned and beautified by the wealth of all Asia, and was counted one of the seven wonders of the world. Ephesus became the scene of fierce warfare between the powers of righteousness and the powers of unrighteousness.

There were two devoted leaders there – Aquilla and Priscilla – and they, labored untiringly for quite a long time in this city of idolatry. At an earlier date, twelve of John’s disciples had helped in a small way, but their efforts were undoubtedly very feeble, owing to their limited knowledge of the Scriptures at that particular time. A study of *Acts 19* is necessary to gain a knowledge of what the early Church was up against as-well-as the present day Christian and the present day Church. Today we face many if not more in the abominable world we live in today.

The very eloquent and capable Apollos was also there, but accomplished very little against the gigantic power of darkness in the great city of Ephesus.

Paul was used of the Holy Spirit to break the power of darkness and lead converts against the terrible systems of idolatry and superstitions. The leaders of Diana hated Paul with a passion, and would have liked to have killed him had not God protected him. Paul had a job to do and, the devil could not stop him. The forces of evil trembled under the preaching of Paul.

Next in line was beloved John. After leaving his home in Jerusalem, John lived in Ephesus and for about 30 years made that city the headquarters for his work for the Lord Jesus. The glory of Ephesus has departed and the once proud heathen city, the capital of idolatry, is now a miserable village.

When Paul preached, he did not preach a series of sermons on the evils of Diana. He preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The message of death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ will shake the forces of the devil even in the darkest city.

EPHESUS

I. Verse 1: “Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write...;”

- that day as in this day some born again members and some who were just members.
- B. The reason for the more distant form of addressing the church was because the church had sunk so low morally that the Lord could not address it through John as to the saints.

Paul wrote to the saints but now the saints had departed from their first love.

Verse 1 continues “...These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven candlesticks.”

The first church addressed is the church of Ephesus, covering the time period from approximately 33 A.D. (The birth of the church at Pentecost) until 100 A.D. when John, who

wrote the Book of Revelation, died. The letter is to the *Angel* or, literally, the “*Messenger*” of the church of Ephesus, and is from the One who holds *the seven stars in his right hand and who [walks] in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*

- C. In **Chapter 1:20** “...*the stars are seen in His hand.*” The stars derive their light from Him who is the light of the world. This, of course, is the glorified Christ, as we learned in this chapter and verse. How thrilling to note that the Lord both holds the churches (all believers) in His hand and walks in the midst of them, as well! This is the Christian’s security. The Saviour’s walk among us is to bring us closer to Himself.
1. They are subject to His power (“*Without Him ye can do nothing*”).
 2. The stars are sustained by Him (“*In Him we live and move and have our being*”).
 3. He guides the stars (“*As many as are led by the Spirit they are the Children of God*”).
 4. He holds them fast (“*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, that we may boldly say, God is my helper*”).
 - a. What strength!
 - b. What power!
 - c. What security!
- D. The Glorified Christ is walking in the midst of the Churches.
1. He is moving about, taking note of every need of every individual, not overlooking the difficulties that may arise, the trials and temptations that may come.
 2. Jesus does walk among (or in the presence of) the believers. He never leaves us nor forsakes us, He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is ever near at any time we call on Him.
 3. He walks among the churches, He observes the ways of every believer, and he has grace sufficient for every need of every believer. He will trim our lamps and keep them burning if we will only allow Him to do so.

II. Verse 2: “*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou cans’t not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.*”. . . **Next, Christ Speaks**

Notice that, in each of the seven letters, the Lord begins by commending the local assembly for whatever He can find in them that is good before scolding them for their sins. The Ephesus church began in all purity, as can be observed from a study of the Book of Acts. Then false prophets entered in. This is exactly the warning Paul had sounded during his last gathering in Ephesus: *For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember (Acts 20:29-31).* The leaders of the church judged these false prophets in earlier days, but became las as they lost their first love.

- A. I often make the statement, “You may rest assured that you will receive from the hand of Almighty God exactly what is coming to you.”
1. God is just, He cannot be unjust. He rewards fully.
 - a. If a rebuke is needed, God rebukes.
 - b. If any praise is due, commendation will certainly be given. God commands the church at Ephesus... the Lord Jesus loves to commend His saints when they allow Him to do so.
 - c. He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly, but the sad thing is that most of us will not permit God to take and shower His abundant grace upon us.
 - d. We take God’s second best, when it is His good pleasure that we enjoy His very best.
 - (1) God cannot bless us above what we allow by the way we live.
 - (2) Salvation is free... salvation is by grace; but rewards, happiness, and joy come as the result of faithful labor of love in the Lord.
- B. ***“I know thy works.”***
1. No doubt the good works of the believers at Ephesus were varied and many.
 2. The local assembly there was a working of God.
 3. The believers at Ephesus labored - and the Lord knew about labors.
 - a. They were patient, and the Lord knew of their patience.
 - b. They were patient toward the weaker Christians, but this did not cause them to close their eyes toward evil.
- C. The word ***“tried”*** signifies that the Ephesians had put these apostles to the test and had found that they were not true apostles, but were liars.
1. Many churches need to reread and study this particular portion of God’s message to the church.
 2. Certainly there are false prophets, liars, and spiritual wolves in the pulpits all over the world today, and the sad thing is that only a small minority of believers seem to care.

Today many think it is wrong to judge heresy or wickedness. **NOT SO!** The same Christ who said, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged (Matthew 7:1)* also declared, *“Judge righteous judgment (John 7:24)*. A believer is never to judge a person as far as character and motives are concerned. However, he should definitely judge one when that individual’s doctrine is heretical or his life is fill with wickedness. This is why John said, *Try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1)*” and why Paul stated in *1 Timothy 5:19-20* – *“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”* The church at Ephesus had slipped from its original moorings and was on the way down. Is it no wonder that Mohammadanism swept through the land and destroyed the compromising church that once was mighty under Paul?¹

III. Verse 3: “ *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*”

Part of the reason this church (who had *borne*, and had *patience*, and for His name’s sake had *laboured*, and had *not fainted*) failed may have been that they were too busy serving and not taking time for sweet fellowship at the feet of Jesus. When one is so active that he has no time for the Bible and prayer, he is too busy. Many have fallen to the indictment that follows.

- A. The church at Ephesus had suffered much, had been tried many times but they were cheerful, they did not grumble, they suffered for Christ’s sake.
- B. They had not wearied.
- C. There was no thought of giving up.
- D. A beautiful picture here of complete surrender and whole-hearted devotion to Christ.

IV. Verse 4: “ *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*”
HOW TRUE OF MULTITUDES TODAY!

- A. The members at Ephesus were hard workers. They hated evil and laboured in patience. But in spite of that, the Lord had something against them.
- B. Revealed here is the root of Church and individual failure. The love begins to grow cold.
- C. Remember the joy and love on that day you received Christ in your heart? Then you must cultivate that love where it becomes a part of
- D. Another thought: That first love is Jesus Christ and His commandment. Sometimes we get so involved with organization and trivial matters that we leave that first love.
- E. Church involvement for various reasons other than genuine love to Christ.
- F. When an individual or a church departs from that love, that person will find itself slipping farther and farther as the days and weeks go by.
- G. Anyone can be around the Church just a short time and can tell if it expresses genuine love and fellowship.
- H. It doesn’t take very long to observe the daily activities of an individual to know if the joy of salvation has slipped away.

V. Verse 5: “ *Remember therefore from whence thou are 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.*”

- A. In this verse, judgment is threatened. Jesus had a complaint (the church had left its first love and this was serious). The Lord never forgets His joy in the first love of His people. Neither does He tolerate those who forget their love.
- B. The threat to a Christian nation - has happened before and can happen again.
- C. To the Church — examine and see how far you have fallen and repent. Either come back to the purpose of the Church or I will remove My influence.

- D. To the individual, there is a strong message involved. Examine and repent and return to the first love. If you refuse to do My work, there will be someone else raised up. His work will be done. His desire is for us, but if not me, then someone. This is very serious.
- E. Mohammedism (Muslims) is the major religion of the province of Asia Minor – so we see the lampstand has been removed.
- F. Churches today that can't hold a light as compared to the growing spirit-filled churches.
- G. I believe that unless the western (world repents, the lampstand shall be removed and be placed somewhere else. Maybe in Brazil or in areas of India or Africa where there is an outbreak of Christianity or what we may term as a spiritual revival.

Again I digress!

Well it happened! After the conquest of Mohammedanism, the church of Ephesus became nonexistent. People for as long as man has existed have refused to listen to the great **"I AM"** and to make matters worse we don't seem to believe what He tells us. For the sake of our Saviour, please, I beg you, please don't let this happen to you or your church! Nonexistent? I pray not. Has our Saviour died in vain? Would we have Him crucified again. Those who know my wife and I are aware of the fact that we both love to sing. Songs seem to, for as long as music has been written, make provocative statements such as one of my favorites, **Once Was Enough for Me!** Was it for you? Many of those old standards ask many of the questions that we need to continually be reminded to do. If an effort were to be made I'm sure one could take the sum of most "Gospel" music written, place it in the right order, and when finished there would be a great volume of theological studies.

There's a beautiful song that my dear wife sings titled **"I Wonder if He Ever Cries?"** by Bonita Stevens. Just about every time she sings it I'm moved to tears. The words are most appropriate, and it goes like this:

Verse 1 When I think how Jesus died and for my sins was crucified, Oh, a love such as this I just can't comprehend. Then I think how He must feel to have suffered through that ordeal, Yet His love has been rejected by so many through the years..

Chorus: I wonder if He ever cries when He thinks of how He bled and died. Does the memory remain can He still feel the pain of sin and shame He bore for me. And every time He sees His scars does it bring a tear into His eyes, when many never serve Him not caring how He loved them I wonder does it make Him cry..

Verse 2 When I think about the blood that Jesus shed through love and all the pain that he suffered in dying agony yet in the midst of all this grief, He had mercy on one thief, who simply asked for mercy and salvation he received.

Chorus: I wonder if He ever cries when He thinks of how He bled and died. Does the memory remain can He still feel the pain of sin and shame He bore for me. And every time He sees His scars does it bring a tear into His eyes, when many never serve Him not caring how He loved them I wonder does it make Him cry..

I must admit, I don't ask myself that question very often, but I should! What about you?

Now! Before God finishes his pronouncements of commendations (*praise*) and condemnations (*judgments*) upon the church of Ephesus, he adds...

VI. Verse 6: *“But this thou hast, thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which hate.”*

There are two distinct views in the interpretation of this verse and both have particular merit. Before we look at these view I want to take time aside for just a moment in this study to try and illustrate the power of the original language (KOINŌNIA GREEK!

There is a complexity of conveying the strength of the original tongue (most likely, not just Greek but KOINŌNIA Greek, literally meaning to have in common, partnership, fellowship, denoting fellowship recognized enjoyed. It is said to be the language of the “common people” ie: the everyday man.

The strength of Greek compared to our English can be seen in this common illustration that follows. We read our English, King James Bible, or any other modern translation, and we come to the word **Nicolaitans** and in that moment we see just a name but allow me to illustrate exactly what is seen in the original Greek.

Nicolaitans is a term derived from two Greek words (Nikolaites (Νικολαΐτης, Nikōlaītēs) meaning adherent (**laity**)& Nikolaos (Νικόλαος, Nikōlaōs) meaning victorious (literally **heretic, religious rulers over the people** (laity), which when joined together they mean **“victory over the laity.”**

Let us return to the subject at hand. By knowing the answer to the following question we will be forced to examine ourselves in the process!

Who were the Nicolaitans and what was it about them that angered Almighty God?

- A. The Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolaitans of Antioch. Nicolaitans were those who wished to compromise with the world. They wished to be a part of the sinful world and God's kingdom. The church at Ephesus despised these actions as did God. We can see how this could happen in Ephesus and Ephesian-like cities.
- B. A second theory: The Nicholaitans means to conquer or rule over the people. The deeds of the Nicolaitans hated by the people was the setting up of certain men to rule over the ordinary believers of the church, and this probably marked the beginning of the priestly order in the Church, which continues today in the Roman Catholic Church. Every born again believer is a priest. We all can talk with our Lord. So God dislikes those who would claim to be little Jesus Christs.

We have seen in this verse that the Nicolaitans were a religious dictatorship that allowed little or no freedom to its members. This is precisely what the Holy Spirit had in mind when He told the church elders not to be “...lords over God’s heritage, but... ensamples [examples] to the flock (**1 Peter 5:3**).” How this message needs to be emphasized in our day as religious leaders try to impose their man-made rules on each and every member! After presenting this series of commendations and warnings, the Spirit of God adds...

VII. Verse 7: “*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.*”

In this verse we have the Spirit’s call to hear. The church has been called to repent. Now the call is no longer to the group but is individual. Individual and direct responsibility to Almighty God is a cardinal truth and a cardinal doctrine to the New Testament Church.

- A. “*To him that overcometh*” will be given the glorious privilege of eating of the tree of life in the Paradise of God.
- B. It is my personal belief that Christ said He would give rewards to those who withstand evil by sustained faith.
- C. Heaven will be a big place for there will be room for all, but it will not be so big, nor will there be so many individuals, that Jesus will not have time for those individuals. I am so glad I am going there!

How can one become an overcomer? By trusting in the merits of the shed blood of Jesus Christ: Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? (**1 John 5:5**).

THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE TO SMYRNA

Revelation Study 2:8-11

Revelation 2:8–11 (KJV) ^{8}And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; ^{9}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. ^{10}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. ^{11}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.

The second Church named in our Scripture is the Church at Smyrna. The message to this church represents the period of the great persecution. Smyrna was about 40 miles north of the city of Ephesus.

The Smyrna period of church history takes us from 100 A.D. to 312 A.D. These people probably suffered the greatest persecution in all Christianity.

In many respects, Smyrna was a rival of Ephesus. Its natural and commercial location brought commerce, and through commerce came much wealth and splendor. The city, because of its buildings, was called beautiful. Smyrna was not far behind Ephesus in the practice of idolatry. This city was not named in the book of Acts, nor does Paul mention the city. Therefore, we have no way of knowing how the gospel was introduced there, nor when the church was founded.

Their works, faithfully performed in the name of Jesus, brought great tribulation and accompanying poverty, materially. However, great riches were laid up for them in Heaven. In addition, their relentless, dedicated effort brought the Word of God to the entire Roman Empire.

The state laws against Christianity were enforced severely in Smyrna. Jews and heathen combined brought much persecution through the local instituted by Rome. They put pressure on the local law and forced them to carry out their laws against the Christians. During the second and third centuries, the Smyrna church members were fed to the lions at Rome while multitudes cheered. Church history informs us that five million may have been martyred during this era.

The fierce and bloody persecution which raged in Asia Minor had its center in the city of Smyrna. The terrible persecutions lasted about 250 years.

Believe it or not, the church flourished and grew during the Smyrna period! Perhaps a little persecution would do us some good today. We might learn to love other brothers in Christ who have a different religious label than ours. God forgive us for our sectarianism!

Although the persecution was very fierce the Church went through a terrible blood bath; but not without the knowledge of Him who stands in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

- I. **Verse 8:** *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*
 - A. The message to this Church is the briefest of all the addresses.
 - B. The assembly is commended - praised.
 - C. The message comes from One who understands persecution and death. From eternal to eternal. He came into the world to die. Death had no claim on Him because He had not sinned; nevertheless, He died that we might have life. He entered into the very heart of death - and rose again to die no more.

- II. **Verse 9:** *“I [Jesus] 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.*
 - A. The Lord Jesus, our Saviour knows every heartache. He knows every pain, every tear, every burden.
 - B. When the Church is persecuted, it spreads like wildfire. When the Church is at ease in Zion, God’s work suffers sorely.
 1. Jacob was a better man after wrestling with the angel all night.
 2. Paul was given a “thorn in the flesh”. He prayed for God to remove the thorn, but God did not remove it. God promised and gave grace sufficient to bear it - and Paul was richer for it...
 3. The three Hebrew boys knew God from the historical standpoint; but when they met Him in the midst of the fiery furnace they knew Him as they could have never known Him had they not stood when the King told them to bow.

4. Daniel knew the Lord - but I am sure he knew the Lord much better after spending the night in the lion's den, in the company of lions and the angel of the Lord.
- C. Sometimes we are the richest when we are the poorest. We may not realize it, but sometimes we are the poorest when we are the richest.
 1. Sometimes we are the happiest when we think our hearts are broken with sorrow.
 2. Just remember—God's ways are not our ways—and never forget, God knows all about us at all times.
- D. If we are born again, our treasure is in heaven. Our inheritance is there also.
- E. The Church at Smyrna was suffering from the pagan world without, and from an enemy of a religious Character within.
 1. It seems there were some in the Church who were not true believers. They were in the Church for what they could get out of it.
 2. Some of the same false teachers that were in Ephesus had spread their philosophy to Smyrna.
 3. Today we have some of the same practices in our Churches — men and women who unite with the church for personal gain.
 4. It would be interesting to know just why some people do unite with the church, and sometimes keep pushing themselves until they are elected to the leadership. We have them - . they have been in our churches ever since Ephesus and Smyrna, and they will be there until the Lord comes back. They will be left behind when the true Church is taken out. Think of the sensitive situation that will be for some who are left. (Church Leaders)
- F. The Master puts no sugar-coating on the words that express this crooked religious crowd - “are the synagogue of Satan.”
 1. That does not sound like some of the sweet talk we hear from the pulpits today, does it?
 2. Today we hear... “All religions should get together; all denominations and cults should unite—and should come to some common ground of belief.”
 3. No, there is a true church, composed of true believers. All else is false that has not the teachings and salvation of Jesus Christ and belongs to the Synagogue of Satan. We cannot and must not compromise the doctrine of Salvation which is Jesus, God's Son, crucified, buried, and resurrected for us.

In Smyrna, this group of religious pretenders rallied against the Church in its sufferings. They brought false accusations against it, and the Spirit said they were of the Synagogue of Satan. Beware of those who claim to be Christians but deny the deity of Christ. They, too, are of the synagogue of Satan: [For] ...*every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. (1 John 4:3)*. The same is true of those who mix law and grace.

Paul said, “⁽⁶⁾*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁽⁷⁾Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁽⁸⁾But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁽⁹⁾As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6–9).*

Because of the false brethren propagating false doctrine and despising the true believers, persecution came from within. And so it is that this church suffered from outward forces of the devil but also from within. In face of such satanic opposition, Christ's message was...

III. Verse 10: *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you in 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.”*

- A. The Christian mastery of suffering is discussed here. The Christian is not immune from the secondary laws of nature.
 - 1. Satan will tempt and man will be tested. Tribulation and distress will come. Sometimes to make us homesick for heaven. We are to praise God through everything.
 - 2. God does not effectuate suffering but He does use the result to work His will and purpose.
 - 3. The Church at Smyrna had a definitely appointed period of tribulation: “Ten days”.
 - 4. Some Bible authorities point out there may be an inference here to the well-known ten persecutions.
 - a. There may be the inference of the tenth persecution under the ruler Diocletian. This persecution lasted exactly ten years.
 - b. The expression “ten days” certainly signifies a limited period.
- B. In this Scripture, the command is *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*
 - 1. Faithfulness—every step even unto death—is urged by the Spirit throughout the New Testament, and especially in our present Scripture during severe persecution.
 - 2. The rewards will be given by the Master to the faithful.

As we can see thus far, when the hour of trial arrived, the believers were not to fear. They were to keep their eyes on eternal rewards as mentioned by James: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12 (KJV)*

As I mentioned earlier, many Bible scholars believe that the ten days of persecution and you can plainly see that I agree, since church history emphatically support this assertion. Still, the church of Smyrna was guaranteed final victory through the Lord's promises, power, and provision...

IV. Verse 11: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt in the second death.”*

- A. It is the responsibility of the individual to hear the message of the Spirit.
 - 1. We will not be excused on the day of judgment if we depend upon others to do our hearing, our praying, our confessing. It is an individual matter. We must individually hear and obey what the Spirit says to us.
 - 2. I know those who glory in another's faithfulness as if to say, “I'll get to God through my Godly parents.”

- B. The message to Smyrna closes with a promise: “Over comers shall in no wise be injured or hurt in the second death.”
1. The synagogue of Satan raged on one hand, the mass of heathen raged on the other. These two powerful forces were allied together to crush Christianity and destroy the Church... and between them stood the believer—the one who had confessed the Lord Jesus. His only defense was patience and meekness. What was his human outlook?
 2. He could lose everything... friends, material goods, loved ones... yes, even life itself! To be an over comer under such conditions took strong faith, clear spiritual vision and understanding, looking to Him who is invisible. Even though He is invisible, He is nearer than breath itself, promising never to forsake the saints, but to go with them faithfully even to the end, and through the valley of the shadow of death.
 3. The over comer may die under torture and in horrible suffering, his executioner may delight in shedding his blood: but the over comer is assured that no matter how horrible physical death may be, the second death shall in no wise, under no circumstances hurt the one who lays down his life for the Gospel. Or the one who sincerely believes that Gospel.
 4. The second death mentioned here refers of course, to the lake of fire, the everlasting abode of the wicked and of the devil himself. (*Revelation 20:10-14; 21:8*)

God give us grace, even though we may not be going through the terrible persecution endured by the believers of Smyrna, to stand true in this hour when liberalism and modernism are sweeping the country. To be an old-fashioned, God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian may cost you social popularity, your so called friends, or it may cost you your job; but if these dear believers at Smyrna were commanded to be faithful unto death, God pity you and me if we are not willing to suffer the persecution that may befall us in this hour.

THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE TO PERGAMOS

Revelation 2:12-17

The goddess Diana was the great idol in Ephesus, and the deity in Smyrna was Dionysos. Ephesus and Smyrna were evil and wicked cities of idolatry, but Pergamos was even worse. It was known as “Satan’s throne,” and also as the place “where Satan dwelleth.” The chosen deity of Satan was substituted for the Lord Jesus Christ in that city. Pergamos was the capital or chief city of Mysia, and the city today still exists under the name Pergamo. But it is not the city of glory that it was in the day when John wrote to the assembly there. Verse 12 sets the stage for the address:

- I. *Verses 12-13: “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.”*

Again, *Revelation 1:16*, proves that the speaker is the Lord Jesus Christ!

- A. At the time John wrote, Pergamos was the capital of Roman government in Asia. Heathenism and idolatry reigned supreme. From Pergamos, which was the center of idolatry and persecution, suffering among the believers spread all over all of Western Asia. Because of this, Pergamos Was called “Satan’s seat” (or throne) and “the city where Satan dwelleth. “ Satan had his headquarters in Pergamos, and from that city he sought to strangle and crush Christianity in that part of the earth.
- B. *Verse 13* sheds light that we certainly need today, relative to the devil and his activities here on earth. He is active in our age.
- C. In spite of all this at Pergamos– the place where Satan dwelleth– “*Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied the faith.*” The saints had been tested but they held true.
- D. They had been murdered but some remained a faithful witness. This was the testimony of Antipas who died for his faith in Jesus Christ.

The letters to the first three churches begin with a commendation. To each Christ says, “...*I know thy works.*” God sees what we do for Him. How sad when backsliding destroys the many good deeds performed in His name! We see this strange twist at Pergamos. Here the bad works outweigh the good ones.

The church period, extending from 312 A.D. to 606 A.D., was one of materialism, self-indulgence, and worldliness. Wickedness spread like a brushfire. The name *Pergamos* has in it the same root from which we get our English words bigamy and polygamy. Pergamos signifies a mixed marriage of the church and the world. This happened because the Babylonian religion established its headquarters at Pergamos and infiltrated Christianity. No wonder this local church is charged with dwelling in the area of Satan’s seat or literally “throne.” They were perched on the doorstep of the devil’s headquarters!

Of necessity, the believer in Christ is in the world. However, he must constantly guard against becoming became part and parcel of Satan’s worldly establishment. They called themselves by Christ’s name (Christians) and made verbal and written assent to the faith, even though they saw the danger of martyrdom in the example of Antipas. Nevertheless, they backslide.

II. *Verses 14-15:* “*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold to the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block 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 Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*”

- A. In the church at Pergamos, there were those in the assembly who held to the teachings of Balaam, and those who held to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. Both groups were tolerated in the local assembly.
- B. Balaam was one whose story is told in *Numbers 25-31* who caused Israel to be defeated because he winked or compromised with sin and evil. They tried to justify their sin in their lives.
- C. The Nicolaitans believed that everything was all right for God is a God of love and would not avenge.
- D. Both philosophies were in the church.
- E. The sin of Pergamos is still with us.

The first grievance against the church of Pergamos was the fact that they had embraced the pleasure of the world or become a worldly church. Secondly, they had given heed to false doctrine—the theology of Balaam. Remember Balaam? He had a smart donkey! How sad to be famous because of one's donkey. The animal was so smart it could outtalk Balaam. What was the doctrine of Balaam taught to Balac? First, *to eat things sacrificed to idols*, and second, *to commit fornication*. Balac had hired Balaam to curse Israel, and Balaam, the false prophet, was unable to get the anointing of Satan upon his spirit for the task. So he figured out a plan of destruction for the Jews. He said, “Let the choice of the women of Balac's kingdom, committed fornication with them, married them, and were eventually drawn into idolatry. How wrong! Those who name the name of Jesus are not to become involved with the world in any manner, [for] *ye cannot drink the cup of the...Lord's table, and of the table of devils (1 Corinthians 10:21)*.”

Not only were the people of the first church of Pergamos worldly, sinful, and idolatrous, but they also shared in the wicked practice of Nicolaitanism as did the church at Ephesus. This, again, is ecclesiastical Hitlerism. It is when the minister of leader says, “I am the head, and you have no choice in the matter,” allowing laymen no voice in the affairs of the church. Concerning the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and the condemnatory statement, *which thing I hate*, is uttered by the Lord God Himself. The solution?

III. Verse 16: “*Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth.*”

This is serious business. The Christian is not to close his mind, heart, and ears to God's warning.

- A. In Pergamos the church had not had the opportunity of leadership as had some of the other churches. So after the warning was given, then came a break for the church which was the opportunity to repent.
- B. If you fail to respond, says God, I will make war against you – “*I will fight with the sword.*”

IV. Verse 17: “*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.*”

- A. To each of the seven churches is given the solemn admonition, “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.*” We then have a promise to the overcomer, concerning special and personal rewards of hidden manna, and a white stone - and in the stone a name written in it.
- B. Overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil is an individual matter. We must be overcomers.
- C. There is the hidden manna with the reference to the **Exodus 16** account of God taking care of His people. The hidden manna (God's richest blessings) will be given to us who maintain a workable faith.
- D. Not only manna but a white stone with our name written in it. A white stone, in the days of John was used as an invitation to a special event. Christ sends a personal invitation to us with our name engraved. Christ deals with a person individually. Also the white stone will distinguish victory and final acquittal

- E. The message attached can only be appreciated by the one receiving the white stone (the overcomer).

As previously noted, the overcomer is the true believer in Jesus (see *1 John 5:4*). He is given the *hidden manna* (the Word of God) and is presented a *white stone*. During ancient court trials, the jurors would lay down white stones to signify a decision of acquittal. Praise the Lord, through the blood of Jesus, the white stones of acquittal have been presented and every Christian has a new name written down in Glory!

THE LETTER TO THYATIRA

Revelation 2:18-29

I. Thyatira—The Peril of Compromise

The longest of the seven letters is written to the least important of the seven cities. Nonetheless, the problem which faced Thyatira and the danger which threatened Thyatira was the problem and the danger of the Church as a whole. That is the reason for the need of careful study.

Verse 18-19: ¹⁸And 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; ¹⁹I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Once again we see that the speaker is the Son of God. The description of His eyes and feet were discussed in *Revelation 1:14-15*.

To this point, all four churches have been complimented for their works. Thyatira, however, was loaded with meritorious service and unusual deeds. She was known for her good works, love, service, faith, patience, and last works. The term “last works” means that this church outdid herself. Her works became greater toward the end of her lifetime than they were at the beginning.

Historically, Thyatira covers the years 606 A.D. to 1520 A.D. However, many scholars believe that this church is found in the world until she is destroyed by the revived Roman Empire in *Revelation 17* and *18*. Although Thyatira had many admirable qualities, she nevertheless had some deep-rooted problems as well.

- A. Thyatira lay on the road that connected Pergamum with Sardis and which went on to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. That was the road that was so important and so well traveled. Therefore, Thyatira was a great commercial town.
- B. Thyatira was a protective city for it was the frontier city to the capital of the Province which was Pergamum.
- C. Thyatira had no special religious significance. Its local hero-god was called Tyrimnus and he appears on its coins. The only notable thing about Thyatira from the religious point of view was that it possessed a fortune-telling shrine, presided over by a woman called Sambathe. Certainly no threat of persecution hung over the Thyatiran Church.

- D. Then, since there was no persecution, let us look at the problem that did exist there for the Christian.
1. Thyatira was a center of commercial trade and the people there belonged to a guild sort of like a trade union. There wasn't anything wrong with that except there were the common meals. These common meals were held in a temple and would begin with sacrifice to many gods. Was it possible for a Christian to participate in a meal like that?
 2. These meals were occasions of drunken parties and slack morals. Was it possible for a Christian, to enter a social occasion like that?
 3. In other words, in Thyatira there was a strong movement, led by a woman addressed as Jezebel, which pled for compromise with the world and the world's standards in the interests of self.
 4. With such things the Christian must have nothing to do.
 5. The problem was the universal problem that still meets us today, the problem of how far, if at all, the Christian may compromise with the world... And it is a genuine problem that cannot be overlooked.

II. The Contents of the Letter to Thyatira

In the letter we have presented to us a series of four questions: What really was the situation of the Church? Who was this woman Jezebel?; Who is the center of the situation?; What did she really teach?; What do the promises made to the Church really mean?

- A. First, What really was the situation in the Church?
1. The letter opens with a description of Christ which had a threat in it. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and His feet are like beaten brass.
 - a. The flaming eyes must stand for the awful penetration of the gaze of Christ that can see into the heart of man. The sin isn't hidden.
 - b. The brazen feet must stand for the strength and power of the risen Christ.
 2. But the letter goes on to open in terms of the highest praise. The love and loyalty and the service and endurance are worthy of congratulations.
 - a. Service is the outcome of love.
 - b. Steadfast endurance is the product of loyalty.

Verse 20: ²⁰*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 sacrificed unto idols.*

3. Then comes the condemnation of the woman Jezebel and all her ways and teaching; and one can hardly avoid the conclusion that she had very considerable influence in the Church at Thyatira.
4. The necessary conclusion seems to be this... on the surface the Church was a strong and flourishing Church. If a stranger went into it, he would be impressed with its abounding energy and all its programs. But, for all that, there was something essential missing; there was a cancer at the heart of it.

5. Here is a warning. A church which is crowded with people and which is a hive of energy and a dynamo of activity is not necessarily a real church. It is quite possible for a church to be crowded, because its people come to it to be entertained instead of instructed, and to be soothed and petted instead of to be challenged and confronted with the fact of sin and offer of salvation. A church may be so full of energy that it becomes a restless ferment instead of a haven of peace. A church may be packed with many activities, but in the abounding energy the center may have been lost, and it may be a social club rather than a real Christian congregation. The state of things in Thyatira is something designed to give us something to think about.
- B. The “Source of the Trouble” centered around a woman whom the letter calls Jezebel. Who was this woman? Who was Jezebel? A variety of answers have been given to that question.

In the Old Testament she was perhaps the most wicked woman of her day. She became so hated that she was thrown from a window and the dogs ate her flesh. The sin of this self-appointed prophetess was to bring Baalism into Israel as a new religion. She is accused of seducing God’s servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. This constituted the breaking of two of God’s commandments to His people Israel: (1) *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them and* (2) *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (**Exodus 20:4-5, 14**) God called upon Thyatira to turn from her wicked ways.

1. There was a woman called the Sambathe, who was a woman fortune-teller. This has to be rejected because the woman Jezebel was a member of the Church and her influence is being exerted from within.
2. There are some who believe she was the wife of one of the Church leaders and it wouldn’t be the first time that had been true.
3. There are some who believe Jezebel to be the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church in their opposition to the individual’s direct relationship with God.
4. The only reasonable conclusion *is* that we have no idea who this Jezebel was, although we can with certainty trace the kind of person she was.
5. It is true she claimed to be a prophetess. It was possible for a woman to emerge as a prophetess within the Church.
6. This woman is called Jezebel, and therefore, her character and her influence must be discovered in the original Jezebel.
 - a. Daughter of a king and wife of Ahab.
 - b. She was a prophetess of her god, Baal.
 - c. Jezebel was the woman who led God’s people from the worship of the true God.
 - d. Jezebel was one of these people who wish to alter Christianity to suit themselves, and who think that they can improve upon the teaching of Jesus Christ.

C. The Teaching of Jezebel.

This Jezebel of a woman is accused (as noted from the The Old Testament accounts) of teaching two things—of teaching the Christian people to commit fornication and to eat meat offered to idols. Let us take the second one first because we are surer of what it means.

1. Could a Christian go to a feast of false worship?
2. This involves many of the problems with the dancing and pool shooting.
3. Jezebel’s teachings stated that there was no use cutting yourself off from your friends. If the standards of the Church and personal interests clashed, then the standards of the Church must be abandoned.

Let us now go back to the teaching of fornication. The strongest possibility was disloyalty or infidelity to Jesus Christ. Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride. The Church is to be true and loyal. Jezebel taught fornication by seeking to turn the Christian to other modes of worship.

Knowing the deep things of Satan is simply testing sin out for personal pleasure. Knowing evil strengthens the soul is the philosophy involved in the doctrine of Jezebel.

It also involves mixing Christianity with all other philosophies. Yet He taught us: “*No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*” The old choice is still the new choice: “*Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.*”

It’s Jesus Christ and His way or Satan and his way. No person can straddle the fence on the matter. I wish all of us would realize that someday we all will!

III. Promises and Threats

The letter to Thyatira finishes with a series of great threats and great promises.

Verse 21: *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

The long-suffering and loving God gave Thyatira approximately 1,000 years to do what was right, but she resisted. How like many twenty-first century Christians, constantly rejecting the touch of the blessed Holy Spirit. The result...

Verse 22: *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*

Judgment always comes: *Be sure your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23)*. The Lord promises to cast this church and her bed partners—those who have partaken of her abominable iniquity, including idolatry and unfaithfulness to the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ—into the Great Tribulation. At that point, the church which sits upon seven hills (**Revelation 17:9**) will be destroyed. The details concerning this event will be discussed in **Chapters 17 and 18**.

The woman Jezebel has been given all the latitude that the divine mercy can give her. If she does not repent, she will be cast into a bed of sickness, and her followers will share her fate. Jesus Christ sees what man is unable to see and He knows if our Christianity is genuine or a fake. It will be a sad commentary for those who shall be cast out who have played the role of church members but have never really trusted with the mind and the heart in Jesus Christ.

The obvious lesson here is that God hates sin. Sentimentalists say, “Oh, the blessed, loving Jesus would never condemn anyone.” Really? WE know that *God is love (1 John 4:8)* and *God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world (John 3:17)*. Nevertheless, when His love is repeatedly spurned and one deliberately follows a course of sin, God’s holiness demands that the sinner be punished. Remember Christ Himself is speaking the following verse:

Verse 23: 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.

How sad that the church of Thyatira, so highly praised for good works in the opening passages, must be horribly judged because of having undone every good thing that had been originally performed in the name of the Saviour. Likewise, today it is possible for the Christian to lose every reward he has earned, *so look to yourselves, that [you] lose not those things which [you] have wrought [or earned] (2 John 8)*. The only good news concerning Thyatira was that a remnant remained faithful in spite of the deterioration of this local church.

Verse 24: 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.

The Lord Jesus informed John that those who did not succumb to Jezebel’s theological follies or fall into the fornication and idolatry propagated by this false Babylonian religion, would not have any other burden. They had experienced enough heartache. The promise is made. The promise is two-fold.

1. Many a missionary has claimed this promise. “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.” I will help you to win others if you try.
2. The second part of the promise is the promise of the morning star. The words are lovely but what do they mean?

Verse 25: But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Here the faithful remnant was admonished to continue in the truth of God’s Word until Jesus returned.

Verse 26-27: *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: ²⁷And 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. ²⁸And I will give him the morning star.*

Christ has promised faithful believers three rewards upon His return to the earth:

- (1) Rulership over the nations during the Millennium: For they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years (**Revelation 20:4**).
- (2) Sharing in the glorious time of perfect righteousness resulting from Christ's personal enforcement and order (*See Psalm 2:8-9*); and
- (3) The abiding presence of the blessed Saviour throughout time and eternity as Christ himself, *the bright and morning star*, is given (**Revelation 22:14 & 16**).

Over the years four main interpretations have been given.

- a. It is taken as a promise of the first resurrection. As the morning star rises after the night, so the Christian will rise after the night of death.
- b. It is taken as the conquest of Lucifer. Lucifer is the devil; he was the angel who was so proud that he rebelled against God and was cast over the battlements of heaven (**Isaiah 14:12**). Now the name Lucifer means light-bringer; and Lucifer is the name of the morning star. If that be so, this is a promise of complete power and conquest over Satan and over sin. Satan will not be able to touch the Christian who is true.
- c. This has been referred to **Daniel 12:3**. There the Promise is: "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.*" If that be so, the morning star is the glory which will come to those who are righteous, and who have helped and enabled others to walk in the paths of righteousness.
- d. All these are very lovely, and maybe all are involved in this promise; but we are quite certain that the correct interpretation is this. The Revelation itself calls Jesus "*The Bright and Morning Star*" (**Revelation 22:16**). And the morning star is nothing less than a promise of Christ Himself. If the Christian is true, when life comes to an end he will possess Christ, never to lose Him anymore.

If your life is not what it once was for Christ, don't be a loser when rewards are distributed. Instead, about-face! Live for Him! Heed the warning of the next verse.

Verse 29: ²⁹*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Let's move on to the next church which will resume in **Revelation Chapter Three**.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6

The fifth letter, written to the local church in Sardis, is also from the Saviour, for Christ has the seven stars in His right hand in **Revelation 1:16** (see illustration on page 18). Again, the Saviour begins by commending Sardis for her works.

Sardis began in 1520 A.D., and undoubtedly extends, historically, into the Tribulation. This period of time covers the Reformation (with its dead, lukewarm churches) and is presently part of the Laodicean period as well. The reason for the deadness is that, during the Reformation, entire countries became Protestant without being born again. Protestantism was made the state religion, and was freely embraced by millions who did not know what it meant to become new creations in Christ Jesus. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)* Thus, Sardis became the mother of dead orthodoxy. Her theme song was not “Standing on the Promises” —her members were dead! God help us to have life! Hundreds of churches follow Sardis’ lead today. For this is the reason millions upon millions need to leave liberal churches for good, and seek out old-fashioned, gospel-preaching lighthouses. Immediately, God called for a fivefold revival package.

The city of Sardis lay between 27 to 28 miles south of Thyatira. The city was very wealthy, filled with pride. It was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia. Sardis was conquered by Cyrus, and with its fall the Lydian monarchy came to an end.

- I. Verse 1:** *“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.”*
- A. This verse identifies the speaker... *“He that hath the seven spirits of God.”* We know of one spirit - the Holy Spirit. But in Revelation the phrase “Seven Spirits” is used to assure us of the completeness, the fulness, and the diversified actions and ministries of the One Holy Spirit.
1. The Spirit of Jehovah
 2. The Spirit of Wisdom
 3. The Spirit of Understanding
 4. The Spirit of Counsel
 5. The Spirit of Might
 6. The Spirit of Knowledge
 7. The Spirit of the fear of Jehovah
- There is in this Christ enough power to overcome any difficulty. Enough to meet any need regardless of what it might be.
- B. The Speaker not only has the seven Spirits of God, but also the “Seven Stars.” This represents the faithful servants of the Lord who are in His hand. If we are faithful, we belong to Him.
- C. Verse one closes with the same announcement made by the Spirit to all the Churches: *“I know thy works.”* But the statement here goes further. Members of the Church at Sardis had the name that they were alive – but the Lord is omniscient, He knows all things – and though Sardis announced life, God knew the Church there was dead.

Dead or Alive? What is the answer and how do we arrive at it? Note :

1. Man looks on the outside — *God the inside.*
2. Many times we look at a big Church and say — “*My, what a Church!*” Yet the small little mission may be the greater. What amounts is what is truly right on the *inside.*
3. The Church had a name of being alive in name only but it was dead.
4. The wheels of organization may turn daily but unless the Spirit of Jesus Christ is manifested, it would nearly all be in vain.

II. Verse 2: “*Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*”

- A. We are to occupy until He comes. We are not to go to sleep on the job of Christian service. We are to be alert.
- B. Watching, working, and praying go hand in hand. Those who are watching – expecting His return will live zealous, pure lives.
- C. What little spirituality remained in Sardis was rapidly dying out, and the assembly there was admonished to “strengthen the things which remain.” The fruit of the spirit still existed there, even though the fruit of the spirit was very weak and feeble; and it must be strengthened immediately, or else all true Christianity would vanish from Sardis. And eventually it did as did the people as well.

The once proud city of Sardis decayed entirely. History tells us that in 1850 not one human being was found living in Sardis. Today all that remains of Sardis is a small village named Sart lies near the site of the ancient city.

III. Verse 3: “*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.*”

- A. Sardis was admonished to:
 1. *Be watchful* or alert: *knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. (Romans 13:11)*
 2. *Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die:* Her people were to do everything possible to salvage the little good that still remained in their bastion of dead orthodoxy;
 3. *Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard:* The Sardis Christians were commanded to recall the former days— the early days of their salvation when they were filled with purity and zeal;
 4. *Hold fast:* They were to retain the simple truth of the gospel and discard the excess baggage of ecclesiastical pomp and ceremony; and
 5. *Repent:* They were to change their minds. Christ’s call was not for personal repentance but for the entire church, yea, the entire movement, to change. The Reformation churches needed to turn back to Christ, seeking His will and His Spirit’s teachings rather than manmade ideas about theological truth.

One of the areas of truth the Reformation churches failed to proclaim was the return of Christ. Therefore, the Lord said that this event would catch them unawares: *Thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* No wonder many of the present-day offspring of the Reformation have ministers who say “No one can understand the Book of Revelation. It is a deep, mysterious, symbolical, figurative book.” Baloney! Preacher, layman, you are the one Christ had in mind. *Awake thou*

that sleepest...and Christ shall [raise you from the dead] (spiritually speaking).

In the midst of this deadness, Sardis had a few who could still waggle, spiritually.

- B. Sardis is asked to remember the time when they first were involved as being a group on fire for Jesus Christ.
 - C. Unless they repent, He will come as a thief and judge them. He will come unknown and unexpected.
 - 1. The Church and the world is not to come to terms with each other. There definitely is a difference— you know.
 - 2. They find greater pleasure in the things of the world than the things of the Spirit.
 - D. Jesus said that He would put an end to the compromised teaching and will remove His Spirit. No one knows when— only that He will do that. Note places out of business.
- IV. *Verse 4: “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.”***
- A. There was a very small remnant in Sardis but they were there. God has always had His true remnant here on earth, and always will have until the Rapture of the Church.
 - B. More false prophets have risen in the last thirty years than in any given period of time prior to that. In this day, men are trying to strip the Lord Jesus of His duty and demote Him to the level of man. Thank God, they cannot, and it will not happen; but these things are a sign that Jesus is at the door.
 - C. The few who had not denied His name and who were genuinely born again, had the promise, *“they shall walk with men in white.”*
 - D. The statement, “they are worthy” could be made only about persons washed in the blood, saved by the grace of God. Even though these few might be as a *“branch plucked from the fire,”* they would walk in white because there is no degree of redemption. There are degrees of reward— but when people are saved their sins are washed away and they are as white as snow. Even though these few were cold and indifferent, seemingly almost dead spiritually, they would walk with the Redeemer, dressed in white robes, in that glorious resurrection morning.
 - E. When we are saved, the Lord adds us to the Church. Through the Reformation churches, like the mother out of whom they came, did not practice holiness unto the Lord, there were individuals who did not defile their garments in compromise with the world, the flesh, and the devil. They came *out from among them, and [touched] not the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:17)*. As a result, they were promised the reward of being clothed in white garments, as stated in the latter part of **verse 4** and in **verse 5**:
- V. *Verse 5: “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name from the Lamb’s book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.”***
- A. They were saved— not joined a social order. They were sincere and believed.
 - B. Doubts prevailed - yet they overcame the doubts through faith.

- C. This white raiment is found upon the bride of Christ at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb: *let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:7-8)*. In addition, those who possess a genuine salvation experience will remain in the book of life eternally. What security! Christ says, *I will not blot out his name...before my Father, and before his angels.*

VI. Verse 6: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”*

- A. God help us to be again reminded that we are individually responsible to the Lord God Almighty. We are to hear what the Spirit says— not what man says or teaches.
- B. Let me point out that in Sardis, the admonition to *“hear”* comes after the promise of reward to the individual overcomer. The entire assembly at Sardis was not an overcoming Church. The overcomers there were only the few who had not bowed to the world.

MAKE SURE YOUR EXPERIENCE IS REAL! Let us progress to the next church.

THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE TO PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 3:7-13

The sixth letter is written to the church of Philadelphia and covers historically the years from 1750 until the Rapture.

The city of Philadelphia was twenty-five miles south of Sardis. It was named for its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, who was king of Pergamos. Today the city is named Allah Shehr, meaning “City of God,” and is populated mostly by Greeks (about 25,000 there). The remains of early Christian influences are more clearly seen today in this city than in any other of the cities in Asia where the seven churches were located. The ruins of twenty-five Churches can be found there, and marble pillars— the remains of great Churches— can be plainly seen. No doubt these marble columns are the remains of pillars that were there even in John’s day or shortly thereafter.

The city of Philadelphia continued longer than any of the other cities named by John, and was the last Christian city to surrender to the Turks (Muslims). The name Philadelphia means brotherly love. Brotherly love is a distinct characteristic of the household of God. Jesus said, *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.” (John 13: 35)*

- I. Verse 7:** *“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.”*

- A. The messenger to the Church identifies Himself by saying “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true.” These are divine attributes.
- B. The messenger is further identified by the words, “He that hath the key of David. Jesus

is that one. He is also the one who holds the keys to hell and death.” Once again the message is from the Lord Jesus Christ. However, instead of gleaning a picture from **Chapter I**, as we have in the past, we are now given a new and beautiful fourfold description of the Lord:

1. *He that is holy*: one finds this description of Christ in Hebrews: “*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;*” **Hebrews 7:26 (KJV)**
 2. *He that is true*: Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6)*;
 3. *He that hath the key of David*: Jesus again said, *I am the root and the offspring of David (Revelation 22:16)*;
 4. *He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*. Christ is not only the One who opens the door, but He is “*the door*” (**John 10:9**). Christ’s commendation is presented to the local church of Philadelphia in **verses 8-10**.
- C. Since the door of the kingdom has not been closed, it does not need to be opened in these days by a pope, a priest, a bishop, a preacher, nor an evangelist. The door is open to “*whosoever will.*”

II. Verse 8: “*I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: For thou hast little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*”

- A. This is the door of service, not of salvation. “*Behold I have set before thee an open door.*” Jesus has the key that opens the door of service. Who would dare question His authority to open the door– or to close it? His authority is final and irresistible.
- B. The door of service was open to the Church in Philadelphia because the assembly there had:
 1. Kept His word
 2. Had not denied His name
 3. They did not deny the Lord before a wicked and perverse generation
- C. No man can shut the door which is open to those who honor the Word of God and the precious name of Jesus Christ. Many times doors have been opened and shut. The Holy Spirit definitely shut the door to certain cities. God commands some ministers not to go here or there but in other areas. It is God who opens and closes the door of service. We often run ahead of God while we should let Him lead us. Some preachers go to great pain to do what they want to do. You may rest assured that God Almighty calls, and those He calls, He ordains, and those He calls and ordains, He provides the preaching opportunity.

III. Verse 9: “*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.*”

- A. We meet with the same party here as in the address to Smyrna. The character of opposition may not be the same in both churches, for Satan varies in his method of attacks, but in both the opposition is termed “*the synagogue of Satan.*”
- B. Those referred to are not necessarily of Jewish nationality. It means for those who are not believers in Jesus Christ for He is able to see what man is not able to see and know.
- C. Jesus assures the true believers in Philadelphia that He will make the pretenders, those who profess but do not possess, to come and worship at the feet of the true church. The church is the bride of Christ.

IV. Verse 10: *“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.”*

We immediately realize from this text that the church of Philadelphia is loaded with good works. The open door speaks of missions, and the church covering this era of time undoubtedly has done, and is doing, more than any other group ever attempted to do in the annals of history. Thank God for such vision! *Where there is no vision, the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).*

What a promise! Two things are pointed out here:

- A. *“Because you have been true to the pure word of God.”* Until we reach Heaven we will never know all the importance of God’s Holy Word. Did you know that if the devil could discredit the Word of God, the foundation of Christianity would crumble and the Church of the living God would be destroyed? But that will never happen. If the devil could destroy the Word, he could destroy God, because God and His Word are synonymous. But, *“Thy Word O Lord, is forever settled in Heaven.”*
- B. Secondly, they had not only kept the Word, but they had also kept His name. They had lifted up and praised His Holy name.
- C. *“I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation.”* There are many ideas and doctrines concerning the Church and the Great Tribulation Period that shall come upon the earth during the reign of the Anti-Christ.
 1. Some teach that the Church will go through the first half of the Tribulation.
 2. Some teach that the Church will go through all the Tribulation.
 3. And there are those who believe as I do that the Church will be Raptured before the appearing of Anti-Christ, before the beginning of the Tribulation, “the hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth.”
- D. You may rest assured that the born again children of God will not enter or go through any portion of the Tribulation period that will come upon the earth. True believers keep the Word. True believers confess the name of Jesus. Because of that, His promise is to keep us from that day.
- E. True believers will escape and here is the proof: *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5: 9).* Jesus died on the cross to redeem the soul. He lives to deliver us daily from the power of sin. He is coming in the Rapture to deliver us from corruption as having to do with the mortal body.
 1. Not one drop of water fell until Noah and all his family were inside the ark.
 2. Sodom was not destroyed until Lot and his family were away from the city.
 3. Conflicts of tribulation will not commence until God’s children are safe in His arms. So let no one tell you that the Church will go through any part of the reign of the Antichrist.
 4. The Church is looking for Christ the Lord– not the Anti-Christ.
- F. In **2 Peter 2:9**, we see the judgment has to do with the end of time. *“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:...”* The wicked will be judged through the great plagues and the horrible things that will occur as recorded in the book of Revelation, after the rapture of the Church. God will not touch this earth in tribulation until we are safely out.

- G. Yet, take courage! When all hell breaks loose on this earth and the blood runs like a river for 200 miles, ten feet deep; when sinners beg God to let rocks and mountains fall on them and hide them from the face of Jesus; when men chew their tongues and beg God to let them drop dead (yet they cannot die)— we born again believers will already have been taken out from all this. This rapture could be in our day. No man knows the hour or the day— but the coming of Jesus is imminent. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look to Him and for Him.

Allow me to make a few observations!

Although this group does so much, they are still a minority, *for [they had] a little strength*. One of their great strengths was that they kept His name. Since the church of Philadelphia extends into our present day and even to the point of the Rapture, the command of each of us today is that we never deny His name, for *if we deny Him, He also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12)*. Oh, the tremendous loss some will experience at *the Judgement Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10)*.

Christ also promises these faithful brethren that the members of the synagogue of Satan (false professors of religion as described in *Revelation 2:9*) will be forced to bow and worship the Lord God Almighty, willfully or unwillfully, at a future time (*Revelation 3:9*). This could be at the Judgment Day, for Paul informed the children of God that they would share with Christ in judgment. Hear Him: *Do ye know that the saints will judge the world? (1 Corinthians 6:2)*. Christ himself spoke of that time when He stated: *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (Romans 14:11)*.

Finally, because of their love for Christ, the Philadelphia—era believers are promised exemption from the day of the Lord’s wrath, or the Great Tribulation hour: *I...will keep thee from the hour of temptation (Revelation 3:10)*. In the Greek, the word *from* is *ek*, meaning “out of.” God promises to keep the Philadelphia believers “out of” —not “through” (preservation), but “out of” (evacuation)— the Tribulation.

Thus, the Church will be gone when the terrible hour of Tribulation judgment comes upon all the world to try the earth’s inhabitants. Praise God, “This world is not my home, I’m only passing through.” We believers are not earth’s inhabitants, for our citizenship is in heaven. “*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: (Philippians 3:20 (KJV))*”

- V. **Verse 11:** “*Behold, I come quickly; hold fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*”

This verse does not say to hold to your salvation. Here the Christian is warned to be faithful, lest all rewards (not salvation, but rewards) be lost — even the loss of one’s crown. If you are one of God’s, you have that. It says hold on to your rewards or your crowns— don’t lose that service for God. The promise of **verse 12** is to those who are faithful.

VI. Verses 12-13: *“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 a new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”*

Three blessings are mentioned for the faithful:

- (1) They become pillars in the temple of God.
 - (2) They have the Name of God written upon them (*within and without*), thus identifying them and allowing them access into the city of God — New Jerusalem described in **Revelation 21** and **22**.
 - (3) They have the new name written upon them. The name of God allows them to enter the Holy City, but the new name of Christ entitles them to be His servants, where they shall see His face (**Revelation 22:3-4**). Because the future blessings are so wonderful, the admonition continues...
- A. The church at Philadelphia is a picture of the true Church, just before Christ’s return. Every minuté detail of prophecy having to do with the coming of the Lord has been fulfilled, or is being fulfilled right before our very eyes today. So many things have happened in the past few years, one almost becomes dizzy when comparing current events with prophecy. Things prophesied centuries ago have been fulfilled in our day. We need more and more to preach faithfulness to God in these days.
- B. If ever there was a day when God’s people need to be faithful and stand up and be counted for Jesus, it is today. There are many saved people who will be ashamed at the coming of the Lord. Salvation is God’s gift.
- Rewards are earned through faithful stewardship. **(1 Corinthians 3:11-15)** ⁽¹¹⁾*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* ⁽¹²⁾*Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;* ⁽¹³⁾*Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.* ⁽¹⁴⁾*If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.* ⁽¹⁵⁾*If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* Yes, a believer can lose his reward; but Jesus is our salvation.
- C. There are five crowns mentioned in the New Testament, which can be earned by a believer through faithful stewardships:
1. The incorruptible crowns: **(1 Corinthians 9:25)**
 2. The crown of rejoicing: **(1 Thessalonians 2:19)** *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

3. The crown of righteousness: *(2 Timothy 4:8)* Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.
4. The crown of life: *(James 1:12)* Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.
5. The crown of glory: *(1 Peter 5:4)* And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

If you will study each of these scriptures, you will find clearly stated the requirements for coming into possession of one (or all five) of these crowns.

- D. Some believers will receive a full reward. Others will lose their reward, and their works will be burned. The outstanding danger among believers today is unfaithfulness to the pure Gospel.
- E. Overcomers will become pillars in the temple of God, the strength (the strong) of the temple.
 1. He will be there forever– never to be abused or persecuted.
 2. “I shall be his and he shall be mine.”
 3. He shall be given a new body be filled for the new Jerusalem and he shall be given a new name. He will bear the name of the King of Kings and not the suffering servant.

WE SHALL OVERCOME !

THIS IS ACCORDING TO THE GLORIOUS PROMISE OF OUR LORD AND GOD!!

PRAISE HIS HOLY NAME, YES PRAISE GOD!

Next: **THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA!**

THE SPIRIT'S MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-19

The seventh and final letter is to the local church of Laodicea, which covers the years from 1900 to the Tribulation Hour. The message, as in all previous letters, is from the Lord Jesus Christ. So this message to the Church at Laodicea is the message to the Church today. Laodicea was located about forty miles east of Ephesus. Its name was derived from Lasdice, the wife of Antiochus II, the Syrian who ruled in the early days of the city. Laodicea was a wealthy city, so much so that in spite of the fact that an earthquake destroyed it during the reign of Nero, AD 62, it quickly recovered from that terrible disaster, and from its own resources soon regained all the glory and wealth lost during the great earthquake. At the time John wrote the message to the local assembly there, Laodicea was again a magnificent and wealthy city.

From the account in Revelation, the wealth of the city greatly affected the Church. It seems strange to most people that riches and sorrow go together. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil. Most of the time, riches produce rotten living. There are a few rich people who serve God, and there are a few rich Churches that are spiritual; but the general rule is that riches bring sorrow.

The assembly at Laodicea was "*rich and increased with goods.*" Luxury, self-satisfaction, pride and plenty were the ruin of the assembly there. Today the pride of that Laodicea has been brought down to the ground. Its wealth has been scattered. Its splendor lies in the dust of the earth. The site where that great city once flourished is now the scene of ruin and desolation.

- I. **Verse 14:** "*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.*"
- A. Note the titles of the divine speaker: "*These things saith the Amen.*" This title is a Hebrew word signifying both the true unchangeable nature of the speaker, and the unchanging message of God's Word. The Greek meaning of the word is "*The Truth.*"
 - B. Notice the second title given to the One who is addressing the Laodiceans: "*The faithful and the true witness.*" From Adam to this present time, every witness except this One has failed in one way or another. Who is this One? The Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1. To the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been committed the most grand and glorious opportunity any group on this earth ever had. But it seems that the visible Church has failed. We have failed in being a true witness.
 - 2. I think of America in her infancy and the principles established early on to govern our land. These principles found their roots in the guidelines of Christianity. We can see that we have not been a true witness. Only Jesus Christ is that true witness.
 - C. Notice the third title given to the speaker: "*The beginning of the creation of God.*" Again we get so weary with the arguments about evolution. What difference does it all make—the beginning of the creation was caused by Jesus Christ. There is beauty in the characteristics of Jesus Christ.
 - D. As noted, this threefold description of the Saviour includes;
 - 1. *The Amen.* In Hebrew, this word *Amen* means "true." The complete meaning is "TRUTH IN ITS FINALITY," which pictures Christ as the final truth; (**John 14:6**).

2. *The faithful and true witness.* This statement links Christ to **Revelation 1:5**, where He is called true, and faithful.
3. *The beginning of the creation of God.* Since the Lord is the firstborn of all creation, we again recognize Him as the speaker. Note: (**Colossians 1:15**) “*Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:*”

II. Verses 15-16: “*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*”

The Laodicean church also has works, but her service is rendered in a lukewarm fashion. What a picture of this very day! Look around.

Some of our churches are so cold that their fancy illuminated “billboard signs” could advertise these religious refrigerators as, [—**FIRST CHURCH OF THE DEEP FREEZE**—], “**Dr. Jack Frost, Pastor.**” The situation is so drastic that, whereas parishioners used to quote the verse,

“*Many are called but few are chosen,*” they now think the “**New Reversed Version**” states, “**Many are cold and few are frozen!**”

Spiritually speaking, God has issued an “Amber Alert” because many are missing in action. The threat is grave and God alone knows how serious the present situation literally is.

The condition of the Laodicean church makes God so violently ill that He wants to spue this group out of His mouth. The Greek word is *emeo*, from one who has swallowed poison in order to make him regurgitate. Think of that! A Lukewarm church is an emetic to Christ. But what’s the reason for this lukewarmness, coldness, indifference, and carnality?

- A. “*I know thy works.*” He knows when we think He doesn’t know. When we sin— when we are troubled— when we fail miserably. He knows the spirit that exists in this and in every Church in this land.
- B. Notice the use of the terms “COLD” and “HOT”—not “DEAD” and “ALIVE.” The Laodiceans were in the most dangerous state possible. They were not referred to as being spiritually dead, not as being spiritually alive... they were indifferent. They were lost, of course, for had they been born again they would not have been spued out of the mouth of Him who is the Head of the Church. Total indifference to Christ— not hatred—is the condition of the Laodiceans.
 1. Had the Church been totally cold, there would have been a possibility of reviving the coldness, and the Church might have become warm again.
 2. Had it been hot, the Lord could have blessed it. But it was neither “*cold nor hot.*”
- C. The Church at Laodicea was a group of undecided, neutral members who would not take a stand one way or the other toward Christ or the truth, and this is the most hateful, disgusting spirit possible to display against God’s Word, and God’s Church. Such a condition must be dealt with immediately and gotten rid of quickly. The last condition of the Church is the worst by far. Total indifference is damning more people today than the liquor traffic, the dope traffic, and all other species of sin combined. “*How shall we*

escape if we neglect so great salvation?" It is not the gross sins such as drinking, murder, adultery that damn the soul— it is indifference. Procrastination— putting off receiving Jesus— is the sin that condemns the soul.

- D. The Lord's coming is not mentioned in the message to the Laodiceans. Only judgment is mentioned— they will be spued out, all of them. Not even a remnant will be spared. The Church is totally lukewarm. This event takes place when the Lord comes in the air. When the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ shall rise, living believers shall be changed— and the lukewarm professors will be spued out. All this will occur in the same *"twinkling of an eye."*

III. Verse 17: *"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:"*

The Laodicean era is a highly prosperous one. As a result, her people have erected elaborate church structures worth millions of dollars. (Stop a moment and consider the money presently being invested in buildings used one to three hours weekly.) The command of Jesus is, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15)*. God help each of us to see that although buildings are necessary for worship and service, they should be humble edifices rather than the latest multi-million-dollar architectural monstrosities which glorify men.

- A. We notice that the Laodiceans bragged about their condition— *"Thou sayest."* In Laodicea, there was not only a self-satisfied condition in the assembly but also pride.
- B. *"I am rich."* It is true that the city of Laodicea was materially rich, but the Church had no right to boast in riches, not sell out to the riches of the secular city. Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* I am sure the Church in Laodicea would have matched some of our big Churches today. Churches that own business interests— Churches that boast of savings accounts up in the tens of thousands. I know of a small Church that gives pennies to the cause of missions and has accumulated tremendous bank accounts. The Church of Jesus Christ should not be in the saving of money business but dispensing it for we are only managers of the Lord's money. Wealth (things) at the expense of spirituality is a tragedy and a curse.
- C. *"And have need of nothing."* These people had absolutely no place for the Lord Jesus Christ in their program. They did not need anything He had; they were completely self-satisfied. Even in the very face of judgment they continued to boast. They did not believe in God or judgment. They believed what the modernists are preaching today— *"the goodness of God, the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man."* They did not believe in a God who is angry with the wicked every day, a God who judges in righteousness.
- D. The last part of *Verse 17* is bursting with prophetic truth *"... and KNOWEST NOT, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* These people did not know their spiritual condition. They were totally indifferent to the truth, to the word of God. They were past feeling, and deep down in their own sinful hearts they thought they were sitting on top of the world religiously— but spiritually they were wretched, they were miserable— and yet their blind hearts could not see nor feel their misery.

So it is that God tells the Laodiceans that they are really wretched and miserable, poor (spiritually, though rich materially), blind, and naked. This is true because riches usually make one wretched and miserable. One spends forty years accumulating his wealth and the final thirty years keeping others from getting it. The Laodiceans are also blind because of this fact, they are naked now and in eternity, for they are not clothed with Christ's robe of righteousness (see **2 Corinthians 5:21**).

Look at some, prophecy - before the end of time there will be those who live as they did in the days of Noah and would not even be conscious of their sin. Read in **Genesis 4:16-26** and you will see that the people of Noah's day were not stupid— ignorant men. They built cities. They were business men. They did the things of evil in God's sight until He wiped them out. Jesus is our ark, and when judgment strikes on this earth we will be safe with Him in the sky. All the Laodiceans will be spued out — not one will be left. Surely we are living in the very hour of the Laodiceans. We can sum up the condition of that Church in one sentence. Its actual spiritual condition before the Lord God, the Head of the Church, was totally unknown to the assembly. **"They did not know."** His plea to them is...

IV. Verse 18: *"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 eye-salve, that thou mayest see."*

A. The characteristics of the Laodiceans are summed up by the Spirit in three words:

1. Poverty
2. Nakedness
3. Blindness

The Lord does not command the Laodiceans to repent— He counsels with them and offers to take care of their poverty, nakedness, and blindness. Out of His love for all pleads, if you will, to:

- (1) *Buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.* This probably refers to **1 Peter 1:7**, where *the trial of [our] faith [is] ...more than of gold;*
- (2) *"...buy white raiment"* — undoubtedly, the reference is to the *"garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness"* found in **(Isaiah 61:10)** *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.* " and
- (3) *"...anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."* This speaks of illumination which only the saved share: *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14)."*

We find Him standing by the door, knocking— pleading for just one person to open the door and let Him in— but to no avail.

- B. It cannot be overstated in this matter. The counsel He gives: *“Buy of Me gold tried in the fire.”* This applies as much today as when it was penned by John. The riches of Christ is inexhaustible. He has gold tried in the fire, and to buy from Him is represents our indebtedness and yet it gives to us the solution to our problem of sin.
1. We need the Gold, purified by fire, this points us to the divine righteousness of God, and Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.
 2. *Are your garment spotless, are they white as snow, are they washed in the blood of the Lamb?”*
 - a. I pray that they are!
 - (1) These “White Garments” are the righteousness of only those who are born again, the saints of God.
 - (2) To be clothed in righteousness is to be free from the shame of nakedness [sin].
 3. So as we have noted the eye salve is for spiritual discernment.
 - a. Unless our eyes are opened by the Lord, we cannot discern spiritual matters.
 - b. Unless the Lord opens the eyes of our understanding we will never know the truth that makes us free.
 4. Because of the conditions prevalent in the Laodicean church, the Lord states...

V. **Verse 19:** *“As many as I love I rebuke and Chasten: Be zealous therefore and repent.”*

This message reminds us of **Hebrews 12:6**, which states: *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Spiritual spankings are administered in order that we might be zealous and repent, or “change our minds.”

This passage does not apply to any particular group, but to all Children of God throughout all ages. This verse needs to be preached more today.

- A. Any person who can live in sin, prosper in sin, be happy in sin and continue in sift without the chastening hand of God being placed upon him, has never been a son. He may have made a profession, but is not truly born again. Whom the Lord loves, He whips.
 - B. If we make our children obey because we care and love - think of God for He loves a million times more than we ever could.
 - C. *“Be zealous therefore and repent.”* When people are past feeling, when they know God but refuse to glorify Him as God, when they change the truth of God into a lie and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, when they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gives them up.
 - D. The Laodiceans were neither for nor against God. They were the middle-of-the-roads, lukewarm. They were neither cold nor hot. They would not repent, they could not be zealous, because they were past feeling. They had lukewarm hearts.
-

**THE POSITION OF JESUS
HAVING TO DO WITH THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE
CHURCH AGE.**

Revelation 3:20-22

- I.** *Verse 20: 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.*

This verse is actually a picture of Christ standing outside the door of the latter-day church rather than the heart of an individual, as we so often hear stated. Presently, entire churches and denominations are barring the Saviour's entrance. Unbelievable! However, those who listen to His appeal, open the door, and follow Jesus will not be sorry.

- A. The last picture of the Church is sad. At the beginning (at Ephesus) we found the Lord Jesus standing in *the* midst of the Churches... while at Laodicea He is standing at the door, on the outside, knocking.
- B. The tender, touching call of the Master has been the call of ministers down through the centuries, appealing to individuals to open the door and let the Lord Jesus in.

- II.** *Verse 21: 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.*

- A. This verse is bursting with truth and glorious revelation.
 - 1. How did Jesus come into authority to sit with the Father in the Father's throne?
 - 2. It is true that from the standpoint of deity He had a perfect right to sit there but bear in mind that He humbled Himself, took upon Himself the form of man, and became obedient unto death.
 - 3. He did what He did not have to do for me and for each of you.
- B. There are many Christians who say, "If I reach Heaven, that is good enough for me." Let me hasten to add, that is not good enough for me.
 - 1. It is true that I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in and I want to lay some trophies at His feet when we crown Him Lord of All.
 - 2. And when He reigns I want to reign with Him. I want to sit with Him in His throne.
 - 3. I do not want to be bringing up the rear.
 - 4. I do not want to be in the background.
- C. I want to be near Jesus, like John when they ate the last Supper and John lay his head on the bosom of Jesus.
 - 1. I know I shall not be worthy.
 - 2. I do want to be faithful.
 - 3. I want to be an overcomer and a good steward for His honor and glory.

Finally, one last time, the Lord proclaims the warning...

- III.** *Verse 22: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*