

# Revelation Chapter 3

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## The Church at Sardis

### •*A very ancient city*

Seven hundred years before this letter was written, Sardis was one of the greatest cities in the world. It is reputed to be one of the oldest cities of Asia. Aeschylus, Thucydides, and other Greek writers mention it as a city of renown. It probably dates back to before 2000 B.C. Sardis was the ancient Capital of the Lydian empire (1200 B.C.) and residence of the royal dynasty of the Mermnades.

### •*A strategic Location*

It was located at a strategic place between Pergamos, Smyrna, Ephesus, Philadelphia and Phrygia. Sardis favored commerce and it became a very wealthy city. Gold and silver "Lydian Staters" were the first coins in the world—in about the sixth century B.C.

### •*Great Riches*

At its zenith, Croesus, its king, became proverbial for riches. Its patron deity was the goddess Cybele, (known as Diana in Ephesus) whose son, Midas, was the wealthy but effeminate king of Phrygia. He is fabled as the one whose touch turned everything to gold.

### •*Seemingly unconquerable*

Sardis was situated on a hill 1000 feet above the broad valley of the Hermus at the foot of Mt. Tmolus. It appeared to be impregnable. However, the sheer precipitous cliff was clay, which suffered continual erosion and the untrustworthy mud left occasional cracks which could be exploited.

This false confidence was reflected in the character of the inhabitants: false confidence, appearance without reality, promise without performance, outward appearance of strength betrayed by want of watchfulness and diligence.

### •*Lack of watchfulness fatal*

When besieged by the Persians in 549 B.C., Croesus, then king of Lydia, left unguarded the precipitous cliffs on three sides of the city. After a 14-day siege, Cyrus offered a reward to any man who could find a way of scaling the apparently unscalable cliffs. One of his soldiers, Hyeroeades, noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements and noted his path to retrieve it, thus revealing an unguarded oversight. In the darkness of the following night, Hyeroeades and a Persian party climbed the cliff and clambered over the unguarded battlements to take the city.

### •*Nothing learned from past*

But the Sardians did not learn their lesson: in 214 B.C. the formidable cliffs again proved susceptible to a hazardous climb when Lagoras repeated the exploit of Hyeroeades and the city was similarly taken by Antiochus. The philosopher Hegel said "History teaches that man learns nothing from history." The Sardians were not watchful.

### •*Faded Glory*

By the New Testament time, most of its earlier dignity and splendor had disappeared. An severe earthquake in 17 A.D. caused major damage. Today the little town of Sart has only fragments of its proud history.

#### **Letter**

Ephesus  
Smyrna  
Pergamos  
Thyatira  
Sardis  
Philadelphia  
Laodicea

#### **Church Age**

Apostolic Age  
Age of Persecution  
Imperial Church  
Age of Papacy  
Reformation  
Missionary Church  
Apostate Church

#### **Dates (A.D.)**

to 100  
100 - 313  
313 - 590  
590 - Tribulation  
1517- Tribulation  
730 - Rapture  
1900- Tribulation

## The Letter to the Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1 (NIV) *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

Revelation 3:1 (KJV) *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.*

### •Recurring refrain in this letter ---> name

Like a thread through this letter is the word "name", in v1.thou hast a name... in v4 ...a few names ..... and again in v5 ...blot out his name. We will see that this is central to the characteristics of this church and its time in church history.

### •the word --> name

onoma {on'-om-ah}

translated as -> - name 194, named 28, called 4

1) name: of proper names

2) the name is used for everything which the name covers, everything the thought or feeling of which is aroused in the mind by mentioning, hearing, remembering, the name, i.e. for one's rank, authority, interests, pleasure, command, excellences, deeds etc.

3) persons reckoned up by name

4) the cause or reason named: on this account, because he suffers as a Christian, for this reason

### •The denominational church

The root of this word is where we still today get the "denominations" from. So this letter, historically and to the present day covers the period of time beginning with the reformation.

Why does Jesus use the title "Seven Spirits of God"? This is an Old Testament idiom of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2).

Isaiah 11:2 (NIV) *The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--*

Isaiah 11:2 (KJV) *And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;*

Why does Jesus use this title with this particular church? Many denominations today are very uncomfortable with the Holy Spirit. Beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit is a major cause of division within the church either pro or con.

### •Alive in name only

A church that puts any kind of activity rather than Jesus Christ as first importance is considered dead. Our age, more than any other can be characterized by appearance rather than substance. Jesus, who sees behind all human facades gives a devastating judgement to this church: On the outside you look alive, but on the inside you are dead.

Matthew 23:27 *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.*

## Criticism

Notice that there is no commendation. In the seven letters to the seven churches, this is one of two where Jesus has nothing good to say of the church as a whole.

### •Dead church

We too must be ever watchful and remember what Jesus said (Matthew 7:21-23):

*Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

*Matthew 7:22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'*

*Matthew 7:23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

Their earlier enthusiasm and blessings passed away and was replaced with cold formalism. Many churches today are like mausoleums or museums and others like a Hollywood show. In either case there is no true life from God. True Life from God always shows up first of all as love.

**•Be watchful, wake up**

*Revelation 3:2 (KJV) Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

*Revelation 3:2 (NIV) Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.*

The admonition to be watchful in various areas is extremely important. Since it is getting very close, one major area we must be watchful in is His second coming. We see this in the parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

*Matthew 25:1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*

*Matthew 25:2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise.*

*Matthew 25:3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.*

*Matthew 25:4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.*

*Matthew 25:5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.*

*Matthew 25:6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'*

*Matthew 25:7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.*

*Matthew 25:8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'*

*Matthew 25:9 "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'*

*Matthew 25:10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.*

*Matthew 25:11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'*

*Matthew 25:12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'*

*Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

Paul admonishes us in this also (Romans 13:11; 1 Thess 5:6) where he goes on to tell us what this wakefulness entails.

*Romans 13:11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.*

*Romans 13:12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

- ***Watch for the wiles of the Devil***

An example of another area of watchfulness in to watch the wiles of our enemy the devil, (1 Peter 5:8) and his temptations of us.

*1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

*1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

- ***Watch for false teachers***

We must also be watchful against false teachers (Acts 20:29-31)

*Acts 20:29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*

*Acts 20:30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*

*Acts 20:31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.*

- ***Reformation incomplete***

Jesus complains: "...works not complete": Christ is looking for something from us. Our love, our loyalty, our service. Without Him, we can't do anything (John 15:5). Without us, He won't.

*John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

The Reformation was a heroic period in church history. Martin Luthers rediscovery of the scriptural truth "Salvation by faith, not works." (Ephesian 2:8-9) was revolutionary after centuries of works and money oriented dogma of the Roman church. The Reformation did not go far enough. However its failures persist unto this day. The allegorization of Scripture is at the top of the list. Examples of these are doctrines concerning Christ's literal rule in the Millennium. The Millennium and the Rapture of the Church are not accepted literally in most mainline denominational churches today.

- ***Truths lost***

Major truths of the Reformation are increasingly lost. The justification by faith alone, (1 Peter 1:18-19)

*1 Peter 1:18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*

*1 Peter 1:19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

the inerrant Word of God, (1 Peter 1:25)

*1 Peter 1:25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.*

the utter lostness of man, (Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 64:6)

*Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

are some of the important teachings of scripture many even so called evangelicals no longer teach and obey.

## **Exhortation**

*Revelation 3:3 (NIV) Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.*

*Revelation 3:3 (KJV) 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.*

### •*Hang in there*

Jesus tell the church in Sardis and us also to **repent, hold fast, keep and obey**. All these are in the present imperative meaning continuous action. The Apostle Paul echoes this also (1 Cor 15:58) Beware a spasmodic Christianity.

*1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

### •*Surprised by His coming*

Jesus says he is coming like a thief and tells them "...thou shalt not know...". Sardis (historically as well as spiritually) didn't know when the enemy was coming and they will also be surprised when the one they call Lord will come upon them. (Matthew 25:13)

*Matthew 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

In many denominational churches the second coming at best is ignored, or at worst denied. (2 Peter 3:4)

*2 Peter 3:4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."*

### •**Attitude and actions of the watchful**

But what of those who do watch? When you see the news or read the paper, does your heart cry: "come quickly" (Revelation 22:17)

*Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

### •*Blessed hope*

"Looking for that blessed hope": (Titus 2:11-13).

*Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

*Titus 2:12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,*

*Titus 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,*

### •*Children of the day*

Sardis was not like the "Children of the Day" of (1 Thess 5:5). He who walks hand-in-hand with Christ cannot be taken unawares by the Coming of Christ

*1 Thessalonians 5:5 You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

### **Promise to the Overcomer**

#### •*Names again*

*Revelation 3:4 (KJV) 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.*

*Revelation 3:4 (NIV) Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.*

The church as a whole is not included in the promise, but again, like Tyatira only a remnant within that church. Jesus also speaks of this: "little flock..." and the "narrow gate" (Luke 12:32; Matthew 7:13-14)

*Luke 12:32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*

*Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.*

*Matthew 7:14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

This implies that out of the denominational churches a relatively small number of people will be with Jesus in the end. This is a very sad and sobering thought.

*Revelation 3:5 (KJV) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

*Revelation 3:5 (NIV) He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*

### •**White garments**

White is the symbol of purity and holiness. White light includes all possible colors and God is light and clothed with light. ( 1 John 1:5; Psalm 104:2)

*1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*

*Psalm 104:2 He wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent*

He expects us to also come to the light. (John 3:20-21)

*John 3:20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

*John 3:21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."*

Coming to the light in its essence means coming to Jesus, not one but continually.

### •**The book of life**

The "Book of Life" is a register of the citizens of heaven. Some say that the phrase "blot out" means loss of salvation. However if we learn what He means by the word "overcome" (Revelation 12:11) it becomes clear that a true overcomer according to the Lord's definition will not lose salvation.

*Revelation 12:11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

### •**Book of remembrance**

Closely allied to the more widely known "Book of Life" is the "Book of Remembrance" wherein the Lord writes the names of those who overcome by their testimony and reverence God above all else. They will be the ones spared the judgements to come as God makes a clear separation between the saints and sinners.

*Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.*

*Malachi 3:17 "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.*

*Malachi 3:18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*

*Malachi 4:1 "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them.*

*Malachi 4:2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.  
And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.*

*Malachi 4:3 Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty.*

### •**Confess their name**

Here we have the name mentioned again showing that the name is closely connected to the one who bears it. Jesus promises to confess all who confess Him.(Matthew 10:32-33) That is part of what He means by the "word of their testimony" we just looked at.

*Matthew 10:32 "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 10:33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.*

### •**Books of Death and Life**

The Bible contains two books of genealogies, one of death, the generations of Adam ( homework -> Genesis 5:1-32). When you read this list notice the refrain "and he died" except for Enoch.

The other genealogy lists Generations of Jesus Christ ( homework-> Matthew 1:1) where the death refrain is absent, because all in the godly line of Messiah are alive.

Psalmist expresses the hope that the wicked will be blotted out of the book of the living. (Psalm 69:28) Daniel also writes about the final salvation of God's people who are written in the book.(Dan 12:1).

Some believe that the book of life is a list of those for whom Christ died. The Book of Life is mentioned in Revelation a total of seven times. (Rev 3:5; Rev 13:8; Rev 17:8; Rev 20:12; Rev 20:15; Rev 21:27; Rev 22:19).Is your name written there? How do you know? Is there anything in your life more important than making sure your name is in that book?

### **Closing**

*Revelation 3:6 (KJV) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

*Revelation 3:6 (NIV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

Once again we have the personal individual admonition to carefully use our ears to listen to and put into practice what Jesus is saying.

Sardis was untroubled by any heresy. Orthodoxy can be an excuse for lack of diligence and laziness. In much of the church of our time, fragmentation and denominationalism have replaced apostolic teaching and practices. Sardis, as many churches especially in the western countries, was untroubled by any attack from the outside. It had ceased to matter (2 Tim 3:5). A truly vital church will always be under attack. If the world or those religious people in other dead churches finds no fault in our church, it is a dead church.

None of the seven churches had the proper evaluation of themselves, -- good or bad -- only Jesus could correct them, I pray that He will do this for our church and for us individually.

### **The Church at Philadelphia**

The youngest of the seven cities, now known as Alashehir, was built in the area acquired by Pergamos in 189BC. King Eumenes II, King of Pergamos, had a younger brother, Attalus II, who was his successor, and won the third last name Philadelphus ("One who loves his brother"), after which the city was named, for his loyalty and affection for Eumenes. Philadelphian coins show the two brothers as completely alike in height, features, and dress.

The area was well favored for wine production. Dionysys, the god of wine, was the principal deity. The city was well situated on the imperial post road from Rome and Troas to Pergamos, Sardis and to the interior of Phrygia. It was a virtual gateway to the high central plateau of Asia Minor and thus became a missionary center for spreading the Greek language and manners into the eastern parts of Lydia and Phrygia. This missionary character of the city seems to be stressed in the letter to the church of Philadelphia.

The area (called Katakekaumene, "the Burned Land") was a highly volcanic region and suffered repeatedly from earthquakes. It was almost completely destroyed in the disaster of 17AD which devastated Sardis and ten other cities. Tremors were reported for years afterwards. Civic and economic disruption lasted for more than twenty years.

Generous assistance and financial relief from Tiberius caused the citizens to name the rebuilt city Neo-Caesarea ("New City of Caesar"). Later, in the time of Vespasian, it was changed to Flavia, his family name. The name changes were shortlived and the old name Philadelphia was soon revived. Prosperity was never fully regained. The city was under a legal jurisdiction of which Sardis was the center.

The city of Philadelphia, during the 14th century, stood alone against the entire Turkish empire as a free, self-governing Christian city in the midst of a Turkish land. Twice besieged by great Turkish armies, its people reduced to the verge of starvation, they had learned to defend themselves, and resisted to the end. At last, about 1379-1390, it succumbed to a combined Turkish and Byzantine army. Until then, Philadelphia had held fast. In 1922, Turkey and Greece fought in Philadelphia. Today, the few remaining Christians remain underground, as they generally have to in an Islamic country.

### **The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia**

The church at Philadelphia is the one most Christians would claim to be members of. Philadelphia was the second of the two churches that received no "F" on their report card from the Lord. Like Smyrna, the suffering church, He had no complaint against them.

This is a church that delights Christ! It is interesting in reading the various commentators on this letter. The Baptist commentators make the church appear to be a Baptist church, while the Presbyterian commentators make it sound Presbyterian.

*Revelation 3:7 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open."*

*Revelation 3:7 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;*

#### **•Holy**

Here Jesus writes to the church of brotherly love and reminds them first of His fundamental attribute of holiness. In the other letters our Lord uses symbols to describe himself that come from the vision John had of him, recorded in chapter 1. In this letter however Jesus makes no reference to that vision. He uses other titles to describe himself. He tells them plainly who he is and what he does. Who he is is "the holy one" and "the true one." (Rev 6:10; Lev 11:44; Isaiah 6:3)

*Leviticus 11:44 I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground.*

*Isaiah 6:3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."*

*Revelation 6:10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"*

He is the holy one--morally perfect. His character is without flaw or blemish. And he is genuine reality.

He was Holy at His birth (Luke 1:35);

*Luke 1:35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."*

Holy at His death ( Psalm 16:10 quoted in Acts 2:26-27);

*Psalms 16:10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

Holy in His present priestly office (Hebrews 7:26).

*Hebrews 7:26 Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*



### •*The Word --> True*

alethinos {al-ay-thee-nos'} ; adj

- 1) that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect corresponding to the idea signified by the name, real, true genuine
- 1a) opposite to what is fictitious, counterfeit, imaginary, simulated or pretended
- 1b) it contrasts realities with their semblances
- 1c) opposite to what is imperfect defective, frail, uncertain
- 2) true, veracious, sincere

Jesus reminds John and us here by re-iterating that He is the only true God. He said this to the disciples directly and John reminds us all in his Epistle of this foundational truth. (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20)

*John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

*1 John 5:20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

Thus we should serve Him (Luke 1:75) "in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

*Luke 1:74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear*

*Luke 1:75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

### •*Key of David*

Jesus is granted full administrative authority. (Matthew 28:18)

*Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

Eliakim carried a heavy key on a loop slung over his shoulder, indicating his power to grant or deny others an audience with the king. (Isaiah 22:15-24) Eliakim alone decided who would get access to the king.

*Isaiah 22:20 "In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiyah.*

*Isaiah 22:21 I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.*

*Isaiah 22:22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.*

Jesus alone can admit to the presence of God. Jesus refers back to that passage in Isaiah and applies it to himself. (Luke 1:32-33) is one of many scriptures that speak of a kingdom.

*Luke 1:32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,*

*Luke 1:33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*

### • *Open and shut*

Janus, was god of doors and hinges (also called Patulcius and Chusius, "opener and closer"). This position was later usurped by the Pope and cardinals (from cardo, a hinge), whereas Jesus has exclusive claim to this position and needs no vikar. No human power can contravene what he determines.

### **Commendation**

*Revelation 3:8 (NIV) I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.*

*Revelation 3:8 (KJV) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

### •**Known deeds**

Again as in other churches Jesus says that He knows where they are and what they're doing.

### •**Open door**

To a church like the church at Philadelphia the Lord says he will open doors of ministry and service, and no one can shut them. The apostle Paul understood that the Lord is the opener of doors. (1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3)

*1 Corinthians 16:9 because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.*

*2 Corinthians 2:12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me,*

*Colossians 4:3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.*

and also on occasion the closer. (Acts 16:6-7 )

*Acts 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.*

*Acts 16:7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.*

However, the door which had been closed to him once was opened to him later by the Lord.

An open door can also be the door of deliverance, where Jesus referred to Himself. (John 10:7-9).

*John 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.*

*John 10:8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.*

*John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.*

A closed door may also be a door of deliverance, keeping damaging circumstances away (Gen 7:16)

*Genesis 7:16 The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.*

or keeping the unwelcome out. (Matthew 25:10)

*Matthew 25:10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.*

It is evident that the Lord opens and closes doors in our life as He sees fit according to His sovereign will and we would do well to be sensitive to not try to break through in our stubbornness or do an end run around a closed door or fail to grasp the opportunity of an open door.

### •**Little strength**

An open door is given when a church fulfills the conditions that will allow it to move through that door once it has been opened. Chief among those conditions is that it have discovered the power of the Spirit. It is spiritual power the Lord is talking about. (Zechariah 4:6)

*Zechariah 4:6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.*

### •**The Word is central**

Jesus says of this church at Philadelphia, "You have some power, but not much." We need to remember that the presence of the Spirit is promised to each church and believer without any condition whatsoever. But the power of the Spirit is given only to those churches and individuals who learn to keep his word and to not deny his name! Those two things are central in the ministry of every church.

### •**Not denied my Name**

They lived in a time and so do we today, when the deity of Christ is blatantly denied by seminary, pulpit and certainly by cults. The Philadelphians proclaimed the God-man and His substitutionary death for sinners. Jesus assures them that loyalty has its sure reward.

**•False Jews**

*Revelation 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.*

*Revelation 3:9 (KJV) 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.*

The church there, as elsewhere in the Roman empire, suffered at the hands of the large Jewish community in the city. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, writing to the Philadelphian church a few years after John's Revelation referred to the Jews, who had so long persecuted the Christians there, as being converted and turning in contrition to those whose adversity they had caused. Jesus used this same phrase "synagogue of Satan" with Smyrna, the other church that didn't get any complaint (Rev 2:9).

**•Compulsory acknowledgement**

These Jews, and by extension, (Phil 2:10-11) all other enemies of the Lord will be compelled to acknowledge the boss, the King of the Universe and in so doing grudgingly admit they were wrong and we who are redeemed are right.

*Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*Philippians 2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The Apostle Paul writes a similar commendation to the Thessalonians in (2 Thessalonians 1:4-10)

*2 Thessalonians 1:4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you*

*2 Thessalonians 1:7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power*

*2 Thessalonians 1:10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

Can this commendation be applied to our church?

**•Patient endurance**

*Revelation 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.*

*Revelation 3:10 (KJV) 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.*

Jesus (2 Thess 3:5) commends the church for patiently waiting on the Lord, especially in regard to the coming of His kingdom.

*2 Thessalonians 3:5 May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.*

**• Active waiting**

This waiting is not a passive do nothing kind of waiting, but active participation in what God is doing. Jesus Himself is waiting patiently for that day. ( Heb 10:13),

*Hebrews 10:13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool,*  
yet presently working in us and through us. He will make justice (Psalm 110:1-6) on this earth rule at last.

*Psalms 110:1 Of David. A psalm. The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."*

*Psalms 110:2 The LORD will extend your mighty scepter from Zion; you will rule in the midst of your enemies.*

*Psalms 110:3 Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.*

*Psalms 110:4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."*

*Psalms 110:5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.*

*Psalms 110:6 He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.*

#### **•Missionary church of the 18th & 19th century**

This church represents the missionary church of the 18th and 19th century, where one of the principal truths recovered by the evangelical movements, was the Lord's return for His Church. Viewed from the standpoint of Christian history, this church of Philadelphia foreshadows the great Evangelical Awakenings of the 18th and 19th centuries, following the time of decline among the Reformation churches. The Moravian Brethren in Germany began to meet in small groups for prayer, catching again a vision of God and what he could do, and eventually sent out missionaries to other parts of the world. It began in England as the movement which we call the Puritan Movement. John Bunyan, who wrote Pilgrim's Progress, was one of these Puritans; John Newton, whose hymns we sing so often, was another. This Awakening also encompasses the great Wesleyan Revival and George Whitefield's preaching in both England and America. In this country it includes the movement called the Great Awakening, with Jonathan Edwards as one of its leaders, and others such as D.L. Moody and the many Circuit Riders who rode horseback up and down the Eastern seaboard, later expanding westward when the nation began to move west.

#### **• Kept from the tribulation**

This church is to be kept **from the time** of tribulation, from the period of, not only the actual tribulation. He is not speaking about tribulation in general, but of a very specific time in history. The Lord tells us what this time will be like for those who dwell upon the earth, later in the book. Jesus warns that this time will come suddenly (Luke 21:34-36).

*Luke 21:34 "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.*

*Luke 21:35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth.*

*Luke 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."*

In contrast, he promises the church at Thyatira (Revel 2:28) that they will go into great tribulation. The true missionary church will be raptured before the tribulation. Paul also writes about a rescue "from **the** coming wrath", using the definite article, pointing to a very specific wrath for a very specific time period in human history.(1 Thessa 1:10)

*1 Thessalonians 1:10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from **the** coming wrath.*

Paul, writing to Christians speaks of this specific day of wrath(1 Thessa 5:9) and says we are not appointed to suffer wrath, but to have salvation.

*1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) Paul gives us a very detailed description what will take place.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

It would not be much of an encouragement if the faithful church had to suffer the wrath of God, but Paul says that being spared out of that day of wrath ought to be very encouraging to believers.

### •**Who live on Earth**

We who belong to the Lord are really only pilgrims here on earth living in tents, our real home is in heaven. (Heb 11:13; Phil 3:20)

*Hebrews 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.*

*Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

This word speaks of those who are the "Earth dwellers" who will be the subject of the wrath of God. All of them who dwell upon the Earth (Rev 6:10; Rev 8:13) will experience woe.

*Revelation 6:10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"*

*Revelation 8:13 As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"*

When we study these passages we will detail what some of these woes will be.

### •**The word --> live**

katoikeo {kat-oy-keh'-o}

1) to dwell, settle

1a) metaph. divine powers, influences, etc., are said to dwell in his soul, to pervade, prompt, govern it

2) to dwell in, inhabit

2a) God is said to dwell in the temple, i.e. to be always present for worshippers

*Revelation 3:11 (NIV) I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*

*Revelation 3:11 (KJV) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

## **Exhortation (no criticism)**

### •**Watch that crown**

Concerning same word "quickly" we discussed earlier, it is again from the root we get the word "tachometer" from, implying that once the end time clock starts ticking, the events will unfold rapidly and suddenly.

The He adds to hang on to what you already have, **present tense**, a crown, something very precious. Notice also the Lord says "Thy crown": They already have it! Paul also reminds us (Colossians 2:18) to not be robbed by those teaching falsehood.

*Colossians 2:18 Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.*

Nowhere are we told to prepare for the Great Tribulation!

## **Promise to the Overcomer**

*Revelation 3:12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.*

*Revelation 3:12 (KJV) 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] my new name.*

### **•Temple Pillar**

Revelation has many references and allusions to the Old Testament and the temple. When Solomon built the temple, there were pillars involved (1 Kings 21) which were given the names Jachin and Boaz. Jachin means "He shall establish, in His counsel" and Boaz translates to "In him is strength."

### **•The Name of God**

Repeatedly the Bible brings up the concept of a name. (Rev 19:12; Rev 19:16; Jer 23:6;)

*Revelation 19:12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.*

*Revelation 19:16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

*Jeremiah 23:6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.*

If in scripture something is mentioned often, then it is obviously more important than something that is only spoken of once or twice. In scripture, a name is always descriptive of the thing or person that name is attached to. To Israel, the name of God was holy and they did not speak it. Above all the name of Jesus is preeminent. (Phil 2:9)

*Philippians 2:9 (NIV) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,*

David, the anointed King of Israel, was for a time exiled from his kingdom and took refuge in a cave in Adullam (1 Sam 22:1; 2 Sam 23:13). David, refused by his people, gathered three classes of people around him: men in debt, men in danger, and men that were discontented. He transformed them into mighty men. He ultimately left Adullam for his crowning.

Today Christ is earth's rejected King, but the Anointed King will soon return to take His rightful throne. He will give His city—the New Jerusalem—its new name, and each of His own will be marked with His new name, a badge of triumph.

## **Closing**

*Revelation 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

*Revelation 3:13 (KJV) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

### **•Personal appeal**

Once again Jesus speaks here to each of us individually. Even here, in one of the churches where Jesus had nothing negative to say He appeals to each member personally to take to heart what He says. If you

are truly His own, then He wants you to rejoice at the thought of His coming. (Luke 21:28) as we see increasingly the fulfillment of His promises.

*Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."*

## **The Church at Laodicea**

South of Philadelphia, not far from Colossae, stood the large and prosperous city of Laodicea on the banks of the river Lycus, a tributary of the Meander.

It was the twin of Hierapolis, six miles away, which was renowned for its hot springs. The Turkish government is attempting to harness this geothermal power source. Laodicea stood midway between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colossae. It was fed by an aqueduct from Hierapolis, the water being lukewarm by the time it arrived in Laodicea.

The city was a highly successful commercial and financial center. The remains of a theatre, aqueducts, baths, gymnasium and stadium still survive to testify of its former luxury.

### **•History**

It was never militarily defensible, so its strategic posture was one of compromise.

The city was originally founded by the Ionians about 2000 B.C. as a relatively small town of Diospolis, but in the 19th century B.C. the Hittites added it to their expanding empire. A thousand years later it was captured by the Phrygians and soon afterwards by the Lydians. It was renamed Rhoas, but in about 250 B.C. it was taken by the Syrians, and Antiochus II rebuilt the town and renamed it after his wife, Laodice.

It became part of the Kingdom of Pergamos about 190 B.C. and ultimately passed into the hands of the Roman Empire. According to Josephus, there was a large Jewish colony there.

### **•Church History**

The church there was probably founded by Epaphras. Coloss 2:1 implies that it was not yet visited by Paul, although he addressed a letter to it (Coloss 4:12-17), which may very well have been a circular letter, a copy of which has been preserved for us as the epistle to the Ephesians.

*Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

*Colossians 4:13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.*

*Colossians 4:14 Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.*

*Colossians 4:15 Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house.*

*Colossians 4:16 After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.*

*Colossians 4:17 Tell Archippus: "See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord."*

On the other hand, Paul's first letter to Timothy was written by him from Laodicea (1 Tim 6:21+ [KJV]). Some 30 years earlier Paul had warned Archippus who was thought by some to have been the son of Philemon, to be more diligent in fulfilling his ministry. There is a tradition that Archippus had become the bishop of Laodicea. It may have been his weakness which contributed to the spiritual condition of the church here.

### **•Economy**

At the junction of roads leading from Ephesus and Smyrna and handling caravan trade as far east as the Yellow River in Punjab by the China Sea, much wealth flowed through Laodicea. It was a city of merchants, bankers, and gold refiners. Cicero held court there and did his banking there.

Textile manufacturing was also a source of considerable revenue. Laodicea was also known for the quality of black wool produced from a particular strain of sheep bred in the Lycus valley and for the cloth and carpets manufactured from it.

A famous school of medicine was there, especially known for an ophthalmic ointment. This eye salve was a mixture of oil and the collyrium powder, described by Aristotle as "Phyrgian powder".

### **The Letter to the Church at Laodicea**

*Revelation 3:14 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.*

*Revelation 3:14 (KJV) 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;*

#### **•Laodicea - the people rule**

The roots of this word mean "the people rule" which is great for governments but terrible for the church. The Lord should be ruling the church. This and other factors show that this is the church of the end time in which we now live. Today most churches are ruled in much the same manner as our political systems, by majority vote. This the root problem in this church.

#### **•The Amen, faithful & true witness**

Amen means true or verily and is descriptive of God. (Isaiah 65:16)

*Isaiah 65:16 Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.*

Jesus said He came on order to bear witness of the truth. (John 18:37)

*John 18:37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*

The implication being then that whoever does not listen to Jesus is not on the side of truth.

#### **•Ruler over the creation of God**

The NIV rightly translates this term "ruler of creation" as a term of honorable rank. (John 1:1-3)

*John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

*John 1:2 He was with God in the beginning.*

*John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

Jesus is the one who as God created everything. (Colossians 1: 16-17) and is pre-eminent over His creation.

*Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

*Colossians 1:17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

Isn't it interesting that this letter corresponds to the era when a denial of the creation by the commonly taught theory evolution as fact characterizes our society? The majority of educated fools today prefer contrary to fact the speculation of pseudo science rather than the revelation of the One who actually did it! The primary heresy of our time is that there is no creation, that everything just sort of happened by chance. In spite of the fact that the actual discoveries in every branch of science point to a very intricate design containing a tremendous amount of information, our schools and media still spout forth the total myth of evolution.

#### **•Uniformitarianism teaching of today**

The apostle Peter warned (2 Pet 3:4) that in the last days scoffers would come teaching uniformitarianism, disallowing for great discontinuities such as the flood of Noah or the second coming of Jesus.

*2 Peter 3:4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."*



Even in many denominational churches there is skepticism concerning the second coming and acquiescence to the teachings of evolution. Both the flood and the second coming teach that God intervenes in history. It is clear that the religion of evolution is a major sign that we are living in the end of the ages.

### **Criticism (NO commendation)**

*Revelation 3:15 (NIV) I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!*

*Revelation 3:16 (NIV) So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

*Revelation 3:15 (KJV) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

*Revelation 3:16 (KJV) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

#### **•Luke warm water is an emetic**

Jesus tells this church that it makes Him sick, making Him vomit because of their indifference. This is the only church where the Lord expresses disgust. The one certain barrier to truth is the presumption that one already has it. How many of the major denominations manifest a true passion for the Gospel today? This the only one of the seven churches that didn't have a call to repentance. The Lord says He is going to throw them up.

#### **•Empty riches**

*Revelation 3:17 (NIV) You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*

*Revelation 3:17 (KJV) 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:*

Does this describe many of our churches and Christian organizations? In our society much effort is expended in many areas to look good, yet there is no substance. It is like a movie facade that looks good up front but there is nothing behind it. There are many churches that bring great resources into appearances but don't meet the deep needs of their members.

The apostle Paul warns us: (2 Tim 3:5)

*2 Timothy 3:5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

Jesus certainly is not going to take a church like this one into His kingdom. What a contrast between this church and with Smyrna. In their own eyes they were poor, but the Lord called them rich. At Laodicea the opposite was the case. This is the ultimate rebuttal to affluent contentment and the spiritual complacency. This church was worse off than any of the previous! It is spiritually poverty-stricken. The Lord says He is going to throw them up. Jesus asks if He will still find faith when He comes back. (Luke 18:8)

*Luke 18:8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*

### **Exhortation**

*Revelation 3:18 (NIV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

*Revelation 3:18 (KJV) 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 eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

#### **•Buy pure Gold**

Jesus here is speaking to merchants, bankers, jewelers, clothing manufactureres and other business men. He is counselling them to get their truly valueable inventory from Him. We read there is the great value of God's word. (Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 12:6;)

*Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.*

*Psalms 19:8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

*Psalms 19:9 The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.*

*Psalms 19:10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

*Psalms 19:11 By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

*Psalms 12:6 And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.*

God tells us that true riches cannot be bought for money, but are a gift He paid for, that becomes ours when we listen to Him. (Isaiah 55:1-2)

*Isaiah 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*

*Isaiah 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.*

#### **•White clothing --or-- black wool**

A significan chunk of the Laodicean economy was based on the shiny black wool they were famous for. Anyone coming to the Lord with any other clothing, representing righteousness, will be violently rejected by the Lord. (Matt 22:11-13)

*Matthew 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes.*

*Matthew 22:12 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless.*

*Matthew 22:13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

This church was proud of their riches and had no intention to put on the robe of humility.(1 Peter 5:5)

*1 Peter 5:5 Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

#### **•Eyesalve**

This church was blind to the realities behind the curtain of this time-space dimension. They only saw with natural eyes and needed an eye-opener like Gehazi, Elisha's servant, did.(2 Kings 6:17)

*2 Kings 6:17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

They were famous for their collyrium eyesalve, which unfortunately did nothing to help them see their serious shortcomings, such as hypocrisy for example. (Matthew 7:3-5)

*Matthew 7:3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*

*Matthew 7:4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?*

*Matthew 7:5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

Their blindness and nakedness are not incurable, they could still choose to go to the Great Physician for help.

**•The Rebuke of Love**

Revelation 3:19 (NIV) *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.*

Revelation 3:19 (KJV) *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Are you being rebuked and chastened? If so, it is because Jesus loves you. (Deut 8:5; Proverbs 3:11-12)

Deuteronomy 8:5 *Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.*

Proverbs 3:11 *My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke,*

Proverbs 3:12 *because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.*

In the first three churches the call for repentance is to the body as a whole and these are viewed as still being capable of repentance as a whole church. Pergamum, Thyatira and Sardis are asked to repent as a whole, but only a remnant within each of them evidently will do so. This last church is not even asked to repent as a whole, but in this church the call to repentance is only addressed to the individual. This church as a whole, as the two before them, is beyond saving as a corporate entity, only individuals are called. This church is thoroughly worldly, and as such individuals must heed the call of Jesus, even still in the midst of the great tribulation. (Rev 18:4)

Revelation 18:4 *Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;*

**•Zealous=Hot**

Is our love for the Lord still hot or has it grown cold, as Jesus predicts it will in many in the last days. (Matt 24:12)

Matthew 24:12 *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,*

An inscription on the cathedral in Lübeck, Germany:

Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us:

Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.

Ye call Me Light and see Me not.

Ye call Me Way and walk Me not.

Ye call Me Life and choose Me not.

Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.

Ye call Me Fair and love Me not.

Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.

Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.

Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.

Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.

Ye call Me Might and honor Me not.

Ye call Me Just and fear Me not.

If I condemn you, blame Me not.

**•Jesus on the outside**

Revelation 3:20 (NIV) *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

Revelation 3:20 (KJV) *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 has been rightly quoted by countless evangelist to call individuals to repentance and stands beautifully on its own for that purpose. However in the context here, Jesus has been thrown out of this church and declared dead. Still, He now stands at the door of the individual heart to be let in.

The English artist Holman Hunt painted Christ standing at the door. A critic noted that he had left off the handle of the door. Hunt replied, "This door is a picture of the human heart. The only handle is on the inside." Jesus will not force His entry. In the romance of Ruth, in Chapter 3, no matter how much Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, loved Ruth the gentile bride, it had to be her move!

**• Invite Him to eat with you**

Jesus wants us to invite Him in and He wants to eat with us. Mealtime is always a time of fellowship which is what the Lord wants. He appears after His resurrection -- eating! (Luke 24:30; Luke 24:36-41)

*Luke 24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.*

*Luke 24:36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

*Luke 24:37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.*

*Luke 24:38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?"*

*Luke 24:39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."*

*Luke 24:40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.*

*Luke 24:41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"*

Has the church failed to tell you that you are a sinner? Has the church failed to deal with you as a lost individual? Has the church failed to offer you salvation in Jesus Christ alone? Has the church failed to proclaim the horrible consequences of sin, the certainty of hell, and the fact that Jesus alone can save? If your church does not proclaim these truths, it is a Laodicean assembly which Jesus will spit out. His true church will always bring such a message, not of culture, but of rebirth.

**Promise to the Overcomer**

*Revelation 3:21 (NIV) To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

*Revelation 3:21 (KJV) 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.*

**• We are expected to overcome**

Jesus overcame and He expects us to do so also. (John 16:33)

*John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Jesus is now sitting at the Father's right hand. (Hebrews 1:3)

*Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

**• Throne as a judgement seat**

A throne is a judgement seat, so what throne reserved for the overcomer is He talking about? For one it is a throne to rule over Israel. (Luke 22:30)

*Luke 22:29 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,*

*Luke 22:30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

It is also a judgement over angels! (1 Cor 6:3)

*1 Corinthians 6:3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!*

It is co-regency with Jesus on the same terms He was given the rulership, namely overcoming the world and its allurements. (2 Tim 2: 12)

*2 Timothy 2:12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;*

• ***How to overcome***

How do we overcome? Jesus give the answer in His word.(1 John 5:4-5)

*1 John 5:4 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

*1 John 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

You don't overcome by keeping the law or by doing works, but by faith in Him.

Later chapters in Revelation give more detail about overcomers out of the great tribulation for example.

**Personal Admonition & Closing**

*Revelation 3:22 (NIV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

*Revelation 3:22 (KJV) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

• ***Individual Appeal***

As in all letters Jesus appeals to the individual. He uses this "who has an ear" expression seven times here and also seven times in the gospels. [Matthew 11:15; Matthew 13:9; Matthew 13:43; Mark 4:23; Mark 7:16; Luke 8:8]

This church was a complacent self-satisfied church, a church that harbored death and was rejected by the Lord whom they had thrown out of their midst, leaving Him standing at the door.

Notice also that He always uses the plural "churches". Each individual church body invariably has some of the characteristics of each of these seven churches. Each believer should pray for whatever assembly he or she is in, that there would only be the good and praiseworthy aspects, but we must examine ourselves carefully to see if some of the criticisms rightfully fit. If they do, Jesus' call is to repent. If there is no change in the corporate body, a person must evaluate if it is time to reluctantly individually leave that fellowship.

• ***The church ends on Earth***

Notice that there is no eighth letter. As we shall see, the church on earth is no longer mentioned in the book of Revelation. After chapter 3, the book takes on a very Jewish flavor and the church is conspicuously absent. Chapter 4 opens with "mets tauta" -- after these things. What things? The time of the churches.

Of the last two churches Philadelphia and Laodicea, one will be raptured and one will go into the great tribulation. My prayer is that we all belong to the church of brotherly love.