

## Revelation, Chapter 2-3

Letters to the Seven Churches (Rev 2-3)

Howard Liverance, January 31, 2024

### Introduction

In his book *The Mark of the Christian*, Francis Schaeffer says this, “the meaning of the word Christian has been reduced to practically nothing ... Because the word Christian as a symbol has been made to mean so little, it has come to mean everything and nothing.”

QUESTION: How does our world define a Christian?

- Anyone who claims some kind (any kind) of allegiance to Christ.

QUESTION: How does the bible define a Christian? (these seven points come from John MacArthur, but they are obviously all from the bible)

1. They have exercised saving faith in Jesus (John 3:15-18, Acts 4:12, 1 John 5:1)
2. They have repented of their sins (Romans 2:4, 2 Pet 3:9)
3. God has forgiven their sins (Acts 10:43)
4. God has made them his children by adoption (Rom 8:15-17)
5. God has transformed them into new creatures (2 Cor 5:17)
6. They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:17)
7. They walk as Jesus walked (1 Pet 2:21-23, 1 John 2:6)

QUESTION: So, are Christians, as defined by these seven points above, PERFECT?

QUESTION: Should we use our imperfection as an excuse for not following Jesus with all our heart, soul, mind and strength? (this is the greatest commandment).

QUESTION: Why do Christians sometimes struggle in our walk?

- We are members of the Kingdom of God, but we still live in the Kingdom of Satan!

Jesus said this to encourage us:

- *Mat 26:41, **Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.***

But, Paul said also this about himself:

- *Rom 7:15-20 (NLT), 15 I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. 16 But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. 17 So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. 18 And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[a] I want to do what is right, but I can't. 19 I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. 20 But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

HOWEVER, Peter said this to assure us that we are lacking nothing we need to live a godly life.

- *2 Pet 1:3-4 (NLT), 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. 4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.*

## QUESTION:

- Are there degrees of faith?
  - *Mat 8:26, He said to them, “Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?” Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.*
  - *Mar 9:24-25, if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” And Jesus said to him, ““If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.” 24 Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” (here we see belief, but also a degree of unbelief)*
- Are there degrees of commitment?
  - *Luke 9:52, But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”*
  - *John 6:66-67, As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” 68 Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”*
- Are there degrees of love?
  - *Mat 10:37, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”*
  - *1 Cor 13:2, If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

**So, is it any wonder that the risen Jesus has messages for His churches? Let’s dive in!**

### **Note each of the letters each follow a defined pattern:**

1. Correspondent (who is writing). In each case Jesus describes himself with unique characteristics!
2. Commendation (praise for successes) – most praises have a “but”, right?
3. Concern (something Jesus notices about shortcomings)
4. Command (what needs to be done to maintain the church witness)
5. Counsel (the reward for obedience)

### **Closing statement of each letter:**

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

- This phrase closes the letter to each of the seven messengers.
- Believers are expected to hear and obey all the letters to the churches.

### **One other very important point:**

- When Jesus says in 2:4 and 2:20, *“I have this against you.”*, The word “you” is singular. It’s not y’all!
- In fact, the second-person singular pronoun is used throughout. Jesus is speaking each messenger, but he is also speaking to each church.
- The letters are each written to each *messenger* (angelo) of each church.
  - Angelo – one who is sent to announce, teach, perform, or explore anything. Translated “angel”.
  - The “angels” of the seven churches are probably bishops or pastors of those churches.
- So, it appears Jesus is holding church leaders themselves accountable for the spiritual health of their congregations!
  - *1 Pet 5:1-3, And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: 2 Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. 3 Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example.*

- *1 Tim 6:20-21, Timothy, guard what God has entrusted to you. Avoid godless, foolish discussions with those who oppose you with their so-called knowledge. 21 Some people have wandered from the faith by following such foolishness.*
- *James 3:1, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly.*
- For this reason, this section of Revelation should easily be called “Letters to the Seven Pastors”!

### QUESTIONS, Thoughts?

### **EPHESUS, The Church of the Lost Love**

- Ephesus was at the junction of four of the most important roads of Asia Minor, plus a seaport.
- Its population was estimated between 250,000 and 500,000. (the theater was typically 10% of the pop)
- It was known as the “Market of Asia”, and for the statue of the fertility god Artemis (Diana)
- Ephesus celebrated a month-long festival every year to honor the pagan deity.
  - people came from all over to worship and spend their money there.
- Paul’s ministry there had an incredible impact on the city, and the entire region.
  - *Acts 19:8-9, Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. 9 But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So, Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus.*
  - *Acts 19:10, This went on for the next two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord. (there is strong evidence that the other six churches were spawned from Ephesus)*
- Timothy served as pastor of the church for a time (1 Tim 1:3).
- Two noteworthy events in Ephesus:
  - The burning of the books of magic arts worth 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:18-19)
  - The riot in the amphitheater instigated by an artisan named Demetrius (Acts 19:23-41)
- Nearly 4 decades after Paul’s first epistle to the Ephesians, most church founders were all gone.
  - The church at Ephesus needed another letter, this time from the Lord himself.

*“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks [a]among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 2 *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you (singular), that you (singular) have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you (singular) have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’*”*

### Correspondent, Rev 2:1

- *The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*

### Commendation: Rev 2:1-3, and verse 6

- Hard work (labor to the point of exhaustion) evangelism, building up saints, caring for those in need.
- Patient endurance (could mean standing firm against persecution and trials)
- Intolerant of evil in the church (perhaps removing unrepentant “brothers”) <Vineyard church experience>
- Discernment and rejection of false teachers – spiritual discernment
- Hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitans, they did not tolerate idolatry or sexual sin.
  - Not clear who they were, but it IS clear what they stood for from the letter to Pergamum.

- *Rev 2:14-15, But I have a few things against you, because you (singular) have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.*

#### Concerns, Rev 2:4

- He does not love like he did at first. QUESTION: Is it a sin not to love?

#### Command, Rev 2:5-6

- Remember from where they came.
- Repent (turn from it)
- Return to the first “deeds” of loving God and loving people.
- Otherwise, your lampstand will be removed (the church will lose its witness or cease to exist)

#### Counsel, Rev 2:7

- *I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.*

#### **Forty years after being marked by love, their love had cooled, and their service had become mechanical.**

- *Eph 1:15-16, For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;*

#### **Failure to obey would result in Christ removing the lampstand of the Ephesian church.**

- The church’s lamp would be removed, meaning an end to their witness. The church would die.
- How do you feel when you enter a church that is all doctrine and service, but no grace or love?

#### **Notice the recurring phrase in v7: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”**

- Churches, plural, this signifies the universal nature and application to all churches, not just Ephesus.
- Although Ephesus is the example here, every church needs to hear every message.
- This was a common practice in those days.
  - *Col 4:16, When this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. (Laodicea is 10 miles from Colossae)*

Ephesus, as a city, eventually did suffer decline after several earthquakes and a harbor that became silted in.

***“The example of the Ephesian church warns that right beliefs and outward service cannot make up for a cold heart.” – John MacArthur***

#### *QUESTIONS, Thoughts?*

#### **SMYRNA, The Persecuted Church, Rev 2:8-11**

- The bible gives us very little go on about Smyrna.
- From history we know the people of Smyrna were loyal to Rome and emperor worship was the LAW.
- Because of this, Christians were severely persecuted and oppressed for their faith, and as a lower class.
- Even the Jews persecuted Christians, and likely reported the Christians to the Roman authorities.
- The rich had it made, and Smyrna, on a gulf of the Aegean Sea, was called the most beautiful city in Asia.
- Smyrna survived several earthquakes and fires and still has a harbor, existing as Turkish Izmir today.

*8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you (plural) into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I*

*will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’ The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:*

#### Correspondent

- *The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life.*

#### Commendation, Rev 2:9-10a

- Suffering tribulation (persecution, affliction, anguish)
- Economically poor, but spiritually rich
- Oppressed by the Jews who blaspheme the faith.
  - Synagogue of Satan, rejecting Messiah, Jews become as much a tool of Satan as unbelievers.
- A short period of suffering in prison was coming (10 days can be taken as literal)

#### Concern

- None – Persecution purifies the church causing the lukewarm and unbelievers to flee.

#### Command, Rev 2:10b

- *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*
- Are we afraid of death? Christians should be fearless. Lolly was told she would die and said, it’s OK.

#### Counsel, Rev 2:11

- *He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’*

#### **A persecuted church is a purified church, just as gold is purified by fire.**

- *1 Pet 1:6-7, In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

***“The persecuted, suffering church in Smyrna stands for all time as an example of those who have heard the word with an honest and good heart, hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” – John MacArthur***

#### *QUESTIONS, Thoughts?*

#### **PERGAMUM, The Worldly Church, Rev 2:12-17**

- Known as the most distinguished city in Asia. It was majestic in its appearance.
- Built on a large conical hill 1,000 feet above the plain below (see the photo).
- There were multiple temples dedicated to Greco-Roman Gods, and various for emperor worship.
- Emperor worship demanded complete allegiance, so Christians had to make a difficult choice.
- It had a huge altar dedicated to Zeus, which the Germans disassembled and carried to Berlin in the 1880’s.
- It contained the second largest library of 200,000 handwritten scrolls in the world. 1<sup>st</sup> Alexandria, Egypt.

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

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

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

#### Correspondent, Rev 2:12

- *The One who has the sharp two-edged sword.*
- Note the negative introduction, the first one. Why do you suppose?

#### Commendation, Rev 2:13

- Satan's throne, possibly referring to the enormous Altar of Zeus and all the false worship there.
- He held fast to His name.
- He did not deny the faith, even when one of their number (perhaps another leader) was executed.

#### Concern, Rev 2:14-15

- "Some" held to the teaching of Balaam, who, for financial gain, caused Israel to stumble with idolatry and sexual sin. Christians sometimes would compromise to maintain their lifestyle or avoid persecution.
- This meant that although they held fast the name of Jesus and had faith, some lived like unbelievers, and the Pergamum church leadership tolerated this. The church did not practice church discipline.
  - *1 John 2:15-17, Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*
  - *Acts 15:29, Jerusalem Council, abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.* This principle was settled by the early church. (Vineyard)

#### Command, Rev 2:16

- *Repent, or I will come quickly and make war against them (those who live like that) with the sword of my mouth.*
- Christ will wage war with those who do not repent. This is not good!

#### Counsel, Rev 2:17

- *To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.*
  - Hidden Manna – divinely sustained the Israelites in the wilderness, it's God's supernatural provision. But this is *hidden manna*, probably symbolic of spiritual provision.
    - *John 6:49-50, Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*
  - White Stone, with a new name written on it (new, in the sense of different quality).
    - The Romans awarded white stones to athletic contest winners. Their names were written on them. These stones served as entrance tickets to an awards banquet. Sound familiar?
    - Which no one knows... *Deu 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*
      - Believers are held accountable for what know, and what we do with what we know!

***"The goal of the church is not to provide an environment where unbelievers can just feel comfortable. It is to be a place where they can hear the truth and be convicted of their sins so they can be saved." (Gently, lovingly, firmly)***  
– John McArthur

#### QUESTIONS, Thoughts?

#### THYATIRA, The Church that Tolerated False Teaching, Rev 2:18-29

- The smallest of the cities to which John wrote, but it's the longest letter!
- It was coming into a time of prosperity and was best known for wool and dyed-good production.
- It had many trade guilds (like labor unions) that required membership to do any business at all.
- Each guild had a deity and held feasts of meat sacrificed to idols and which included sexual immorality.

Rev 2:18-29, *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:*

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

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

#### Correspondent, Rev 2:18

- *The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze.*
- This is a focus on His role as divine judge! He sees everything and he places his enemies under his feet.

#### Commendation, Rev 2:19

- Love, faith, service, perseverance, all increasing! Sounds like a great church!

#### Concern, Rev 2:20-23

- He tolerates Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess, who leads people astray into immorality.
  - Her name may not have been Jezebel, but she had a Jezebel “spirit” (the wife of King Ahab)
  - QUESTION: How did Jezebel die, anyone remember? (2 Kings 9:30-37).
- Two issues:
  - This is in violation of the principle not to allow a woman to preach. (1 Tim 2:12).
  - She was allowed to teach error, promoting idolatry and immorality among “bond-servants”

#### Command, Rev 2:24-25

- *But I say to you, the rest who (did not follow her teaching) [and] are in Thyatira ... hold fast until I come.”*

#### Counsel, Rev 2:26-29

- *To him I will give authority over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron* (Psa 2:7-9)
  - This is a view to participation in leadership with Christ during the Millennium
- *I will give him the Morning Star.* (this is Christ himself, given to his faithful)

***“Churches like Thyatira who fail to obey the message [of Christ] will receive divine judgement. Those who obey its message will receive divine blessing.” – John MacAurthur***

QUESTIONS, Thoughts?

#### SARDIS, The Dead Church, Rev 3:1-6

- Sardis was one of the greatest cities in the ancient world.
- It was located at the western end of the 1,500-mile Roman Royal Road that stretched to Susa (Iran)
- It was quite wealthy due to an abundance of gold taken from the Pactolus River
- Gold and silver coins were first minted in Sardis.

*To the angel of the church in Sardis write:*

*He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your (singular) deeds, that you (singular) have a name that you (singular) are alive, [a]but you (singular) are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember [b]what you (singular) have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 But you have a few [c]people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

#### Correspondent, Rev 3:1

- *He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.*
- He emphasizes that He sovereignly works in His church through the Holy Spirit and godly leaders.

#### Commendation 3:4

- Jesus first goes straight to the concern and adds the commendation later.
- *But you have a few [c]people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.*

#### Concern, Rev 3:1c-2b

- *'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, [a]but you are dead.*
- *I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God*
- This church has the appearance and reputation of being alive, but it is in fact dead.
- QUESTION: What could that possibly mean?
- This is the church of the unsaved. This is the church that is going through the motions but has no life.
  - The word "dead" describes the unsaved, sinful life.
  - *Eph 2:1-2, And you [a]were dead [b]in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the [c]course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*
- It also seems like this is an unfinished work (bringing people to Jesus) and no one seemed to care.

#### Command, Rev 3:2a, 3

- Among the unsaved in the church, there were a few true believers.
- *2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember [b]what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent.*
- They are admonished to 1)wake up and 2)strengthen what little faith remains, before it dies.
- They are also reminded to 3)remember what they have received and heard, 4)keep it and 5)repent.
  - The NT Letters were in circulation at that time, so they had no excuse, and neither do we!
- **These are 5 steps given by Jesus for revival of a dead church.**

#### Counsel, Rev 3:5-6

- The overcomers will inherit heaven!
- "Will not erase". Some believe this implies we *can* be erased. It does not.

***The spiritually dead people playing church need to [heed] Christ's warning of impending judgment. The indifferent believers need to wake up before it is too late to rescue their church. And the faithful few can take comfort in the knowledge that their salvation is eternally secure.*** – John MacArthur

#### QUESTIONS, Thoughts?

#### **PHILADELPHIA, The Faithful Church, Rev 3:7-13**

- Youngest of the seven cities.
- Built as a Greek cultural center.
- Located on the edge of a volcanic area, its soil was well suited for growing vineyards.



*“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:*

*He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:*

*<sup>8</sup> ‘I know your <sup>[d]</sup>deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. <sup>9</sup> Behold, I <sup>[e]</sup>will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down <sup>[i]</sup>at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup> Because you have kept the word of My <sup>[a]</sup>perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of <sup>[b]</sup>testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole <sup>[j]</sup>world, to <sup>[i]</sup>test those who dwell on the earth. <sup>11</sup> I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. <sup>12</sup> He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. <sup>13</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

#### Correspondent, Rev 3:7

- *He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens*
- Jesus once again identifies himself as God, He is holy and true, so we must also be holy and people of truth.
- Key of David, speak of authority in the Messianic line.
- Opening and closing doors, he has complete control, and no one can change it.

#### Commendation 3:8-11a

- Placed before you an “open door”. This may refer to salvation, but also opportunity for ministry, because...
  - They had “little power” ie. Not a megachurch!, indicating they were small but effective.
  - They kept his word ... speaks of obedience.
  - They did not deny his name, despite any pressures they may have faced to do so.
  - They obeyed his command to persevere (NLT)
    - Because of this, he will keep them from the hour of testing coming upon the whole world.
    - This is clearly speaking about the world-wide tribulation which will affect the entire planet.
      - The Greek for *from* (*ek*) means “out-of”, not “through” (Gr: *en*) the time of testing.
    - Plus, many believers will be martyred during the tribulation, and that’s not being “kept”.

#### Concern

- No concerns!

#### Command, Rev 3:11b

- *<sup>11</sup> I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*
- Persevering through difficulties is the mark of a truly saved person. He empowers us to stand firm.

#### Counsel, Rev 3:12-13

- Four eternal blessings are promised:
  1. Make him a pillar (speaks of permanence and security)
  2. Write on him the name of my God (speaks of ownership) like Andy wrote on the boots of Woody and Buzz
  3. Write on him the name of my City (speaks of citizenship)
  4. Write on him “My new name”. Apparently, Christ will have a new name in heaven!

***“The letter to the faithful Philadelphia church reveals that the holy, omnipotent God pours out his blessings on churches that remain loyal to him.” - John MacArthur***

QUESTIONS, Thoughts?

#### LAODICEA, The Lukewarm Church, Rev 3:14-21

- Located at the junction of two major roads, it became a major commercial and banking center.
- Famous for soft black wool made into clothes and carpets.
- A well-known medical center had developed an eye-salve that was exported throughout the world.
- They were so wealthy they turned down Rome's offer to pay to help rebuild after an earthquake.
- No local water supply. Water needed to be piped in from thermals six miles to the south.
- In contrast, nearby Hieropolis had hot thermal water, and Colossae had frigid water from the Lycus river.

*"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*

*The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the [k]Beginning of the creation of God, says this:*

*15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will [!]spit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

#### Correspondent, Rev 3:14

- *The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the [k]Beginning of the creation of God.*
- Amen = Truth, Certainty
  - *John 14:6, I am the way the truth, and the life.*
- Faithful and True Witness = Speaks the exact words from His Father.
  - *John 12:49 (NLT), I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.*
- Beginning of Creation = He is the creator.
  - *John 1:3 (NLT), God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him.*

#### Commendation

- None! Lukewarmness is loathsome to Jesus.

#### Concern 3:15-17

- Deeds always reveal the heart. Their deeds revealed an unbelieving, hypocritical church.
- Both hot and cold water have desirable uses, but lukewarm water is disgusting and induces vomiting.
- They are self-deceived, thinking they are rich, but they are spiritually bankrupt.

#### Command, Rev 3:18-20

- Jesus offers these hypocrites genuine salvation using metaphors they all understand!
- Buy gold refined by the fire, an allusion to their banking industry and prosperity. This is true riches.
- Buy white garments, instead of the black wool garments they were famous for.
- Buy eye salve, the stuff that Jesus provides gives sight to the blind, it's not just soothing to the eyes!
- *3:19 (NLT), "I correct (reprove) and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference."*
  - QUESTION: Who does God love? Are these believers or unbelievers? Look at 18 and 20!
  - **Reprove:** expose, convict, shame. **Discipline:** correction, instruction, training
- *3:20 (NLT), Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*
  - Rather than an individual appeal, the sense here is that Jesus is standing at the door of the Laodicean church and inviting *anyone* in the church to open the door. He is appealing to the lukewarm.
  - QUESTION: If I am lukewarm in my faith am I a believer or an unbeliever?

#### Counsel, Rev 3:21-22

- Overcomers will sit on the throne with Jesus.

- Overcome: to conquer, prevail, to gain the victory.
  - QUESTION: What do the lukewarm have to overcome? Apathy!

***“The message to the Lukewarm Church is obvious: Repent, and open up to Christ before judgment falls.” – John MacArthur***