

SEVEN LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES REVELATION CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

The following is taken from my notes on the Book of Revelation. Hopefully, I'll have the rest of the notes on Revelation available within the next few months. The majority of the information contained in this section comes from the following sources:

Tape series by Chuck Missler
Revelation study by Dr. Henry Morris
Notes from various books by Arthur Pink
Strong's Concordance
Notes from the Torah Club
Josephus
And other sources from various books in my library

CHAPTER 2

We now get to the seven letters to the seven churches. Why did Jesus pick these seven churches? These were seven churches in Asia. Asia means "mire." Aside from that, whenever we have seven in scripture, we have something that is in some sense complete. In some sense, these seven churches represent the complete description or picture of the whole church. We will discover that these seven churches have at least four different applications. First is a local application. Second is "admonitory." These seven churches describe any condition that any church can be in. They also describe every element that is present in every church. Third, there is a personal application for each of these. Fourth is the prophetic area. When these seven letters were laid out they describe the history of Messiah's "church" - His called out assembly. See Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord GOD does nothing
Unless He reveals His secret counsel
To His servants the prophets. NASB

This still applies to us today. God does **nothing** without telling us first! See also 2 Pet 1:20-21.

20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. NASB

As we saw in the introduction, prophetic word does not come from man's mentality.

In reference to the history of the church, the Book of Acts only covers a period of 30 years while Revelation covers from Genesis to the future. Remember, the church is in the Old Testament concealed and in the New Testament revealed.

The church covers the period between the 69th and 70th week of Daniel. Daniel 9:24-27

"Seventy `sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven `sevens,' and sixty-two `sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two `sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolation's have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one `seven.' In the middle of the `seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him." (NIV)

Between verses 26-27 is the gap that is between the 69th and 70th week, which is the church age. This gap will be visible in Revelation 12 between verses 5-6.

Careful analysis will reveal that an identical pattern is to be found in all seven letters to seven churches. First, they are addressed to the angel or messenger of the individual congregation; second, the title of the writer is given, each title being one of the descriptive elements of the vision of the risen Jesus as recorded in the first chapter; third, to each church the Lord begins by saying, "I know thy works," for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:13); fourth, the heart of the message is a joyful word of praise, a searching word of blame, or a combination of both; fifth, the message closes with an allusion to His coming. Following this, there are in every case two more details, but the order is reversed after the third letter. The message has been addressed to the messenger of the church, but applies to the congregation as a whole. There is a final word of admonition to the individual: "He that hath an ear let him hear"; and lastly, there is a promise to the overcomer. In the last four messages, the promise to the overcomer precedes the word of admonition. As time went on, was it necessary for the thought of reward to take precedence over the thought of obedience?

It should also be remembered that Jesus both holds the churches in His hand and walks in the midst of them. It is obvious that these phrases speak of His double attitude toward believers. We have in Him a standing, or a position, and we have in ourselves a state, or a condition. He holds us in His hand because of what He is, because of the value of His own work, and we are secure. He walks among us because of what we are, because of His desire to bring our lives closer to Himself.

BACKGROUND CHAPTERS IN REFERENCE TO THE CHURCHES

EPHESIS: Acts 18 through 20 and Ephesians.

SMYRNA: Acts 15.

PERGAMUM: Numbers 22-24 and 33. You also need to understand Balaam and 1 Corinthians.

THYATIRA: You need to understand what Jezebel was about in 1 Kings 16. SARDIS and PHILADELPHIA are only found in Revelation.
LAODICEA: Colossians.

In each letter, distinctive features of His glory, as described in chapter 1, are chosen by the Lord and are applied to the spiritual condition of the church addressed:

Ephesus, the formal church, is reminded of the presence of the Lord. (2:1)

Smyrna, the fearful church, is reminded of the position of the Lord. (2:8)

Pergamos, the faltering church, is reminded of the possession of the Lord. (2:12)

Thyatira, the false church, is reminded of the perception of the Lord. (2:18)

Sardis, the fruitless church, is reminded of the power of the Lord. (3:1)

Philadelphia, the feeble church, is reminded of the prerogative of the Lord. (3:7)

Laodicea, the fashionable church, is reminded of the Person of the Lord. (3:14)

We can also discern some historical parallels in retrospect, by looking at the churches addressed as well:

1.	Ephesus	Apostolic Age	Before AD 100
2.	Smyrna	Age of Persecution	AD 100- A.D. 313
3.	Pergamos	Imperial Church Age	AD 313- AD 590
4.	Thyatira	Age of Papacy	AD 590- AD 1517
5.	Sardis	Reformation Age	AD 1517-AD. 1730
6.	Philadelphia	Missionary Age	AD 1730-AD. 1900
7.	Laodicea	Age of Apostasy	AD 1900-?

It is fascinating to observe that human nature remains unchanged after two thousand years. The same struggle for obedience and spiritual faithfulness continues in the church today.

Rev 2:1-7 The letter to the church at Ephesus.

As bishop or overseer of the churches in Asia, Ephesus was John's home church, so it was natural that this would be the first letter Jesus had him write. It was an incredibly wealthy city with its famous Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Over the centuries, Ephesus became an important commercial and political center until it was destroyed by the Goth invasion in 252 AD. The church was founded by the missionary labors of Paul and it is recorded in Acts 19 and 20. Timothy was the first pastor of this church.

Ephesus is the formal church. Once it was strong in its love for Jesus, but is seen by Jesus as shifting away. This sets before us the issue of fundamentalism. The picture is that of a church busy and outwardly sound but notably lacking in love, especially in their love for Jesus. There is a post-apostolic church reflected here, particularly in the phrase "thou art fallen" (KJV) in verse 5.

The difficulties of the Ephesian church did not arise from persecutions from the world; the evil came from within.

One of the most striking phrases of commendation is that this church could not bear evil ones. So many Christians today find it easy to bear with the real enemies of Christ who are within the church.

There are also two notable prayers in Paul's epistle to Ephesus. In the first, Paul prays that the Ephesians might have more light, (Eph 1:15-21) and in the second he prays that they might have more love. (Eph 3:14-19) Those verses read as follows: Eph 1:15-21

15 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; 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. NASB

Eph 3:14-19

14 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. NASB

Rev 2:1 Jesus is telling John to write to the angel of the church at Ephesus. This is the same with each of the seven churches. It is always Jesus speaking and in each case, He selects a title or two for Himself. What is the title here? "Him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:..." This one we are somewhat familiar with. We will see that each letter has a very specific idea behind it and every detail of the letter supports that one idea. A clue to know what the letter is really about is to understand the title Jesus selects for Himself. This will be helpful in retrospect as we look back at the letters.

Rev 2:2-3 Each letter starts out with Jesus then saying "I know..." Jesus is here in these letters in authority. Remember the description of Jesus' clothes in chapter 1:12-16? Jesus was clothed in "government" and He speaks as one with authority. He is giving the church a "mid-term" report card, so to speak.

In the case of Ephesus, they received seven good things. Then He gives them His observation of what is bad and then gives them a correction. Next is a very unique call and then a challenge - a specific promise to the believer in that church. The promise is always to the individual. The correction is to the church as a group.

As we mentioned, Jesus lists seven good things in verses 2-3 and then comes verse 4.

Rev 2:4 Here is a heavy word when Jesus uses it: "Yet" (NIV) or "Nevertheless" (KJV) or "But" (NASB). We'll come back to this.

Here is the heart of the matter. This is most serious. It seems as though Jesus is discussing the phenomenon of unchristian good works. If now they proceeded only to good works and had forgotten Jesus, how were they different from any group of benevolent unbelievers? We have many non-Christian groups in the world today who do good works. Good works are not necessarily the exclusive province of believers. If the unbelievers can organize to provide food and shelter for the indigent and if the unbelievers can support charities and agencies dedicated to the enrichment of all society, wherein lies the difference?

The answer is in the love of Jesus. The unbeliever doesn't know or love Jesus. The believer is to make this his "first work."

The healthy church is to find a right balance between sincere love of Jesus and the accomplishment of His purposes through service in this life.

Those churches who establish an order of ranks and levels of importance among their clergy are guilty of this very heresy.

What would be the first love? It is the love of espousal. The word Ephesus means "darling" or "maiden of choice." Jesus' complaint with the church at Ephesus is perhaps they lost the joy of their salvation. They lost the first love one has when they first came to Jesus.

Chuck Missler points out that perhaps they were so busy going about the Kings business, they had no time for the King. They had found God and now they were off to bigger and better things. Unfortunately, when we do this, we have the tendency to go off without God.

Remember David and Bathsheba? After that event, David wrote Psalm 51 and notice especially Psalm 51:12.

Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation,
And sustain me with a willing spirit. NASB

See also 1 John 1:7.

but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. NASB
We must walk in the light to have fellowship with each other and with God. When we walk in the light there is an on-going cleansing of our sins because they are revealed and we confess them. But notice the word "if." It is our choice to walk in the light or in the darkness. The issue is fellowship with Jesus. The "one another" is He and I or you and Him. It is His fellowship. What did He create us for? Fellowship. What is the first commandment? To love God with our whole being. If I can do this, all else will fall into place.

See also Jer 2:2

"Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD,
"I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth,
The love of your betrothals,
Your following after Me in the wilderness,
Through a land not sown. NASB

and 2 Cor 11:2.

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. NASB
Paul is talking about the church.

Turn to Ephesians 5:22-32.

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. NASB

In verse 32, Paul tells us this deals with Jesus and the church. We understand the biological and social aspects of marriage, but we miss the Supernatural aspects of marriage. God ordained it as a supernatural relationship and He uses it as a model of the relationship between Jesus and the church.

It was to the Ephesians that Paul had written as he closed his epistle: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Eph 6:24). A "first love" (or chief love, or best love) is a sincere love. Do we love Jesus in sincerity, or have we lost our first love? That is the great question.

See also Matt 24:12-14.

12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. 13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. 14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. NASB

If we don't live a life of faith, God's Spirit is quenched and His love is blocked. We find the word endures in verse 13. Endures means "To hold one's ground in conflict, bear up against adversity, hold out under stress, stand firm, persevere under pressure, wait calmly and courageously. It is not passive resignation to fate and mere patience, but the active, energetic resistance to defeat that allows calm and brave endurance." (Spirit Filled Bible, NKJV) This is an interesting statement by Jesus of the end times.

The word love here is "agapao" and this is a supernatural love on a supernatural level. Remember also all of 1 Cor 13.

When we think of the Lord Jesus Christ, is it with the same freshness of love as at the first?

If we have been carrying a heavy load, and suddenly put it down there is the feeling of lightness and relief from the burden at first; then we become accustomed to being without it. When our sins were first taken away, we felt the love and joy of resting in the finished work of Christ. But have we slipped back into a drab taking things for granted?

It is this sense that we must think of the fifth verse: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and practice the first works." They had fallen from that fellowship that is both high and deep and that is with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The church at Ephesus had works, labor, and patience, but it had lost the faith, the hope, and the love.

Our fellowship with Him is dependent upon the working of His holiness in our lives. If that first love is not glowing in our moment by moment thought toward Him, we are fallen from the highest place of privilege. For our fellowship with Jesus to be broken means that the believer is fallen all the way from Heaven to earth as to the plane of his living. Is it any wonder that He says, "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen"? When love goes, work that has any value in His eyes, of necessity, goes with it. Any half-hearted service can do no more than dishonor the Lord.

It is possible to serve the Lord for a variety of motives--for the praise of men, for prestige or position, for the sake of reputation, because it is simply the thing to do, because of a sense of duty. If service for God is not born of a devoted passion for the Lord Jesus it is worthless.

It is to be noted that no question of doctrine is raised in all of this. Those believers were told that they were to return to that early attitude of fellowship, and if not, they were going to sustain a great loss.

Rev 2:5-6 If there is no real love for the Lord Jesus, the reason for the assembly's existence has vanished. There is a three word admonition here:

1. Remember
2. Repent
3. Repeat

They are told to remember from where they are fallen and repent. They are also told to do the things they did at first or to repeat them. If we fail to please the Lord, He will remove our witness. Question: Where is the church at Ephesus today?

Verse 6 has one more good point mentioned of them. We'll see the Nicolaitans more later in the letter to Pergamum. What turns out to be the *work* of the Nicolaitons in Ephesus is the *teaching* of the Nicolaitans in Pergamus. The Nicolaitans, whose deeds Jesus hates, were men who came into these early churches with the purpose of usurping the authority of the true apostles, such as John, and even of Jesus Himself. The Nicolaitans attempted to recreate the hierarchy of the Old Testament priesthood. They sought to establish a priestly authority over laymen. They were a group of people who seek to elevate themselves into a special class of priesthood over other Christians. Such men sought the sole right to interpret the Scriptures for other Christians. Centuries later, after Emperor Constantine's conversion, this Nicolaitan heresy produced the Babylonian hierarchy of priests, leading to the spiritual "dark ages" of the medieval period. Peter described them as false teachers. Look at 2 Peter 2:1-3

- 1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.
- 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;
- 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. NASB

And also 2 Peter 2:18-19

- 18 For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,
- 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. NASB

Our best defense against falsehood is to be so acquainted with God's Word that we know and recognize when He speaks.

Jude called them "ungodly persons" in Jude 4.

- For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. NASB

One of the main reasons Peter wrote this letter (2 Peter) is to warn us of the "tares among the wheat." Jude is the same. Peter introduces 6 traits of false teachers:

1. They will start secretly.
2. They will introduce lies (what they teach is not what they mean.)

3. They will deny Jesus.
4. They will lead according to their own flesh and personal gain.
5. They live in greed and reject authority.
6. They will make the truth look like a lie to the world. To them it is all right to lie to bring the people to their flock.

Look at Isa 5:20

oe to those who call evil good, and good evil;,

Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;,

Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! NASB

This is the definition of “blasphemy.” Blasphemy is taking what God says is “holy” and calling it “unholy.” Conversely, it is calling what God says in “unholy” holy.

See also Matt 7:15-21.

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. NASB

Satan can work more effectively by counterfeiting the truth than he can by openly denying it. Dressing in “sheeps clothing” also tells us they pose as God’s servants and it is imperative that we examine their fruit. Obedience means personal involvement.

Some commentators speculate that the Nicolaitans abused grace by not obeying the Lord and they did it in such a way that they made a mockery of grace. Another view is the word Nicolaitans is simply an un-translated word. "Nicao" (phonetic) means to "over come" or "to lord over" and "laitans" is another word for "laity." It is to rule over the people. We will see this later in the letter to Pergamum and the concept of the clergy ruling over the laity; the concept of the church being ruled by a leader as opposed to being lead by a shepherd.

Rev 2:7 It is a Divine principle that only those who desire to do God's will can know God's will. Look at John 7:16-17

16 Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself. NASB

Note that Jesus’ teaching is singular. Now look at 1 Tim 4:1 & 6

1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, NASB

1 Tim 4:6

6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. NASB

Here we find that Satan's doctrines or teachings are plural. Also, only those who have spiritual ears can hear the Spirit's word. Note that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are so much one that what one says, the other says. Also note that the message to the church at Ephesus was also the message to all the churches.

Love is a personal matter. We are saved one by one; we must be restored one by one. No hint is given that the entire Ephesian church would respond to this letter, but the hope is that individuals would. The Lord's call here is a call to individual believers to get back to the daily quiet time with Himself. There is no other way to restore a lost love and a lost life.

The beginning phrase of verse 7 occurs in all seven letters. Does Jesus expect us to understand these seven letters? Yes! The phrase "He who has an ear..." tells us this is not just to the churches, it is to everyone. This letter was written to us, as all seven have been. Also notice churches - plural. As we mentioned, all seven letters went to all seven churches, with the rest of the Book of Revelation. It is a package deal. We will find today that we are probably a blend of all of these seven churches. Hopefully, we are in a little healthier blend than they were.

In the first three letters, the phrase "He who has an ear, let him hear," occurs before the promise to the overcomers. There are two possibilities here: 1. Either this is not significant, or, 2. the Holy Spirit did this on purpose and it is significant. I believe this is significant. This tells us that somehow the last four letters are different than the first three. We'll see this as we go.

To understand this letter to Ephesus, we need to see what we know about Ephesus. We know there are at least three letters to Ephesus in scripture. Paul wrote one, Jesus wrote one and John's first epistle was also to Ephesus.

Paul spent about three years in Ephesus. In Acts 19 we find Paul in Ephesus and the people had been baptized into a baptism of repentance, but not baptized into the Holy Spirit. After a few months, Paul realizes he has to get these people out of the synagogue into their own fellowship.

Paul stayed in Ephesus and started missionary work there and Ephesus became the head of missionary work in Asia.

Look at Acts 20:17-38.

17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them,

"You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with

trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 "And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. 25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more. 26 "Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. 34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, 38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship. NAS

Here is Paul's farewell address. Notice verses 29 and 30. We see the enemies will come from within the church. Paul knew this would happen. Paul taught them that the enemies of the church will come from within the flock.

Paul warned them of this false doctrine and internal attack and about thirty-five years later Jesus writes Revelation 2:2-3. They paid attention to what Paul told them. We are admonished to do the same thing as in Acts 17:11, 1 John 4:1-3, and Deut 13:1-3. These verses read as follows:

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. NASB

1 John 4:1-3

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. NASB

Deut 13:1-3

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. NASB

The warning Jesus gives them is that if they don't repent and return to their first love, He "will remove your lampstand from its place." Note that the threat is not to extinguish its light but to "remove" the light of God's truth to another place. Be careful that you don't become a hypocrite by spending all of your time trying to get others right with God before you worship Him yourself.

Notice again that in verse 7 it is emphasized that this is directed to the churches - plural. This is meant for all of the churches to read and heed. That also includes us!

Rev 2:8-11 contains the letter to the church at Smyrna.

According to the early Christian writer Polycarp, the Apostle Paul founded the church at Smyrna on his missionary journey to Ephesus. The only mention we have of this church comes in the book of Revelation. Of the seven churches, only two escaped condemnation by Jesus, Philadelphia and the church of Smyrna. It is no accident of history that Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two cities of the seven that have survived despite tribulations as important, populous trading centers over the centuries. Smyrna was an extremely wealthy and beautiful port city known for its devotion both to Rome and its pagan gods. It is presently a city of over 300,000 Christians belonging to various Christian denominations.

Smyrna was the fearful church. In 600 BC, the city was destroyed by the Lyddians, and for four centuries its name was lost to history. Ultimately it was restored. It was also practically wiped out by an earthquake, but again it revived. It "was dead, and is alive." The Lord refers to Himself in this letter as the One who was dead, and is alive.

One of the gods of Smyrna was supposed to be the mother of Zeus and she had a crown of porpoises which was known as the "crown of Smyrna." The city of Smyrna is now known as Ismir and is the third largest city in Turkey. It is the city where Homer was born, lived and died.

Smyrna also had to face a problem with ritualism. Mention is made of "the synagogue of Satan" and of a deliberate Judaizing of Christianity.

The letter to Smyrna also brings out the persecuted church. This is emphasized in verse 10 where we find the statement "tribulation ten days." The fact is every real church must endure some degree of tribulation. See Acts 14:21-22

And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." NASB

It is our responsibility to do this.

Look also at 2 Tim 3:12.

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. NASB

Rev 2:8 Smyrna is a Greek word that means "myrrh" or "bitter." Myrrh is an embalming spice. The very name of this church suggests death, persecution and oppression. The title Jesus selects of Himself is a title that emphasizes His victory over death. The church at Smyrna has the power of death over it.

Myrrh is an ingredient in perfume and is also in the holy anointing oil for the priest. (Exodus 30:23) In Esther 2:12 we find it is used for the purification of women. In John 19:39 we find it is used for embalming. It was also one of the gifts given to Jesus at His birth. (Matt 2:11) Gold spoke of His royalty, frankincense speaks of His priesthood and myrrh speaks of His suffering and death.

Notice Isaiah 60:6.

"A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba will come;
They will bring gold and frankincense,
And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD. NASB

This is a post-resurrection view of the gifts. Myrrh is a burial ointment and is not mentioned. When Jesus comes again, He has gifts given to Him: gold and frankincense (incense) but no myrrh. Why? Because He is the resurrected Lord and death is behind Him. He is being worshipped at this time.

Rev 2:9 Jesus watches and monitors the churches. Remember chapter 1:16. Where are the seven stars? In His hand.

As usual, Jesus begins by accenting the positive. He says "I know thy works and tribulation and poverty," First He underscores the persecution at Smyrna and brings comfort with the words "I know."

The saints at Smyrna had lost whatever material possessions they once owned, but in the sight of the Lord they were wealthy. They had invested their treasures "in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Look at Matt 6:19-21

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

NASB

"Treasure" means "wealth in abundance." The words "upon earth" refers not so much to the place but to the kind of treasure. Heavenly treasure can be laid up in heaven for us while we are still on this earth.

Jesus is saying He knows where they are at. He knows they are being persecuted and are in poverty, but He says they are rich. Look again at John 16:33, 2 Tim 3:12 and 2 Cor 8:8-9. John 16:33

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." NASB

2 Tim 3:12

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

NASB

2 Cor 8:8-9

8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. NASB

In 2 Cor 8, Paul is implying generosity is essential in spiritual development. Jesus is the ultimate example for us all. Imagine what Jesus gave up to go to the cross from His throne for us. Also look again at 1 John 5:4.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. NASB

Jesus also refers to those who say they are Jews, but are not. The biblical meaning of the term Jew is "praiser of God." Evidently there was a group in the church posing as true believers, praisers of God, who were not that at all. As Ephesus was plagued with men who said they were apostles but were not, (Rev 2:2) so Smyrna had men who said they were Jews but were not. As false apostles are "ministers of Satan" here, false Jews constitute a "synagogue of Satan." Look at 2 Cor 11:13-15

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds. NASB

As we have mentioned before, when you look for the ministers of Satan, don't overlook the pulpits! Their very claim to be Jews (and therefore God's chosen people) is blasphemy. Zola Levitt related a story of when he applied for a job with an insurance company years ago. The company required all of its agents to go to church every Sunday in order to make contacts with the church people. Zola said he protested because he was Jewish. The manager told him that he could go to the church anyway since his purposes really weren't religious but simply to make profitable personal relationships. He was being told to pretend that he was a Gentile in order to do his worldly works. I wonder if that wasn't what was going on in Smyrna?

See Romans 2:28-29.

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. NASB

These verses describe what a Jew is in a spiritual sense. The real Jew is the one circumcised to God in the heart by the working of the Spirit and whose pride comes from the Lord. See also John 8:12-19

12 Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." 13 The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from, or where I am going. 15 "You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me. 17 "Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true. 18 "I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." 19 And so they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me, nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." NASB

and

John 8:41-47

41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. 43 "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. 44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. 45 "But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." NASB

In verse 19 (John 8) the Pharisees refer to Jesus as being illegitimate. Jesus continues on and in verse 44 Jesus identifies who their father is. Take Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees to Rev 2. What then is Jesus getting at with the church at Smyrna? Legalism! The persecution of the early church was not brought about by the Romans. The religious Jews brought it about. There was a martyr named Polycarp. He was one of the earliest martyrs. He was burned alive on a Saturday (Sabbath) by the religious Jews of the city. Polycarp was the Bishop at Smyrna. This raises the issue of legalism. Jesus freed us from legalism. Turn to Matt 11:28-29.

28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." NASB

The yoke here is spiritual. Men lay heavy burdens on us for salvation (works). These are things men say we must do to "earn" our salvation. Jesus' yoke is easy. He did it for all for us. In Him is freedom. His yoke will provide for us all we need to accomplish what He has called us to do. We are to:

1. Come
2. Take
3. Learn

In Acts 15 we find the council at Jerusalem. The basic question of the council is this: does a Gentile have to become a Jew to become a Christian? From the earliest times in church history, attempts have been made to graft various forms of Judaism onto Christianity. The two systems are mutually exclusive, as Paul clearly recognized even before his conversion. That is why he persecuted the church. Peter, in effect said yes. Paul said no. In Acts 15:14 we see God takes people for Himself out of the nation Israel. Acts 15:14

Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. NASB

In Acts 15:19, James says that Gentiles are not under the law. Acts 15:19

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, NASB

Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses this issue. It is a call from legalism. See Gal 2:11, 17-18.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. NASB

17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 "For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. NASB

They (the Galatians) were trying to re-establish the law instead of grace. Also notice Galatians 3:1-3.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? (NIV)

Believing what you heard means obeying – acting upon what one hears. These verses speak against works of law which is legalism. We didn't receive God's Spirit through works of the law but by grace.

Peter acknowledges he was wrong on this issue. 2 Pet 3:14-15

14 Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, 15 and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, NASB

Throughout the Book of Acts we find it emphasized that the persecution of the Christians does not come from the Romans or Gentiles, but it comes from the religious Jews.

Rev 2:10 There is no promise they won't suffer. Instead, it says they are about to suffer. This is different than some of the other letters. Smyrna is the "suffering church." They were originally persecuted by the Jews and then by ten different Roman Emperors. There were ten distinct outbursts of persecution under the pagan Caesar's (Nero, AD 54; Domitian, AD 81; Trajan, AD 98; Adrian, AD 117; Septimus Severus, AD 193; Maximin, AD 235; Decius, AD 249; Valerian, AD 254; Aurelian, AD 270; and Diocletian, AD 284). The fiery trial soon to be intensified at Smyrna is viewed in three ways: from the human, the satanic, and the Divine perspectives. Each perspective emphasizes a different aspect of human suffering--its misery, its mystery, and its ministry.

The Lord says, *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer*. There is a natural shrinking from suffering. The Lord encourages His own to face boldly the hatred and the violent opposition of the world. Jesus also says *"Do not fear."* The Lord has promised grace sufficient for every need. He does not give martyr grace until martyr time. Our relationship with God depends on God, not me! Shortly after the death of John, a series of great waves of persecution fell on this church. The pastor of Smyrna, Polycarp, a convert and pupil of John, was burned at the stake in 168 AD in that city because he would not renounce his faith in Jesus. It is reported that when he was led to the stake to be burned he said, "Eight and six years have I served Him and He never did me wrong: how can I revile my King and my Savior?" As the flames arose around him they offered him freedom if he would reject Jesus. He died victoriously stating "I am a Christian!"

The intent of the passage is obviously to prepare the church for intense suffering and yet to assure them it would be very brief in contrast to the endless ages of glory beyond it. Look at the following verses: 2 Cor 4:17

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, NASB

Notice the contrast here between affliction and glory.

Rom 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. NASB

and

Is 40:31

Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary. NASB

In the Hebrew it says “will renew their strength.” Renew implies change. It is easy to fly for a time and then run, but when the high times are over will you still walk in the Lord and not faint? See Matt 13:15 & 23.

15 For the heart of this people has become dull,
And with their ears they scarcely hear,
And they have closed their eyes
Lest they should see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart and return,
And I should heal them.' NASB

Matt 13:23

"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." NASB

This happened over a period of time and it is the result of their choice.

Most Bible commentators avoid the phrase “you will have tribulation ten days” since it is hard to identify this particular number. But a knowledge of Jewish history and tradition sheds a great deal of light in this case. What is being spoken of in the verse is a time of waiting until some culminating event. The figure of ten days fits very rationally into the seven feasts of Israel. There are ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. Look at Lev 23:24-27

24 "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month on the first of the month, you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 'You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD.' "

26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 27 "On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. NASB

The Feast of Trumpets was a time of deliverance, as with the trumpets of Jericho or Gideon’s trumpets. The trumpet has always been God’s signal of triumph, as it will be at the Rapture of the Church (1 Thes 4:16). But the Day of Atonement, on the other hand, was the day of life or death to the Jew. Atonement means “to cover.” On this day each year the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple and make the ultimate

sacrifice for the national sins of Israel. If God accepted, then the nation would be spared for another year. If not, presumably the Jews and possibly the whole world might be destroyed in a moment. There could be no more momentous day in every year than Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Thus the ten days between the two feasts were a time of great repentance and personal examination on the part of each Jew. They came finally to be known, and are still known in the orthodox synagogue today, as the "Ten Awesome Days." With eternal life hanging in the balance, the Jew considered the condition of his soul before God for that exact period until the ultimate resolution that was to follow.

Likewise in the New Testament the apostles waited exactly ten days between the ascension of the Lord to His Father and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Since the time between the festival of First Fruits (now called Easter) and that of Pentecost was exactly fifty days, and since the Lord was with His disciples forty days (Acts 1:3), then the disciples must have waited again for ten awesome days. The outcome for the Jew was always that God accepted the sacrifices on behalf of the nation, and the outcome for the apostles was that they were empowered in the mightiest of ways by the Holy Spirit.

Daniel and his three Jewish friends offered to undergo "ten days" of what might seem to outsiders to be sacrifice and deprivation on a diet of only vegetables and water. This is recorded in Dan 1:12-15

12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. NASB

Instead of hurting them, however, this ten days of "proving" or "testing" (Dan 1:14), produced a most satisfactory results. Ten days of testing, in Daniel's case, then yielded over seventy years of a uniquely effective service for God.

The church was a secret concealed in the heart of God from a eternity past. The church has been the object of Satan's persistent attacks from the very beginning. Saints at Smyrna were about to bear the brunt of one of his attacks.

God never permits the saints to suffer without a cause. First we note the Divine reason for this fiery trial. It is simply that "you may be tried." The church is to be tested, the chaff to be separated from the wheat. Next, we note there is a Divine restriction to it. You shall have tribulation ten days. The exact period is marked. On the other side of the trial, the church would be stronger than ever.

Jesus says to be faithful unto death. Ease and prosperity are nowhere promised the Christian as a reward for his faith. We must live for Jesus today. That is the only way to guarantee that we would be able to die for Him tomorrow.

Jesus here says nothing bad about Smyrna. Philadelphia also has nothing bad said about it. There are two churches that have nothing good said about them: Laodicea and Sardis.

Rev 2:11 Jesus promises them death, but He also promises them they will overcome the second death. For the Christian, death is the gateway to life! We need to realize what a heavy letter this is. These people are going to suffer and die and will be taken care of. Those who die without Jesus, however, will also die again. Look ahead to Rev 20:12-15

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. NASB

This most awful punishment describes complete and irreversible separation from God.

Rev 2:12-17 Here is the letter to the Church at Pergamos. It seems to be a principle of church life that the body of believers within the big population centers have a harder time holding to the faith than those in the provinces. The worldly diversions continue to tempt the flesh, and while the spirit may be ever so willing, the flesh invariably remains weak. Those in Pergamos were prey to the materialistic and sinful doctrines of the setting and the Lord goes on to comment on that in 2:14.

The world and the church have no legitimate business with each other except the discussion of salvation in Jesus. Look at James 4:4

You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. NASB

In Revelation Babylon becomes the enemy of God. The sins of Israel mentioned in the above verse contradicted two of their most basic laws and undermined their calling as the chosen people of God.

Pergamos, presently called Bergama, was a three day journey north of Smyrna in the province of Mysia (Turkey). Pergamos was noted for its tremendous temples and statues of pagan gods. The letter to Pergamos was addressed to a church that was drifting into worldliness and carnality. There were some who were resisting the general flow of the tide, but the majority were being swept out to sea. The application of this message to our day must be obvious. Worldliness has swept into the church.

Pergamos was the faltering or compromising church. The town was famous for its medical center and for its magnificent pagan temples. The temple dedicated to *Aesculapius*, the god of medicine, was here. *Aesculapius* was often referred to as "savior." It might be this fact that caused the Lord to refer to Pergamos as the place of Satan's throne, "where Satan dwelleth." This would certainly fit the profile of

Babylonian practices. It could have also been because of the altar of Zeus which was here. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and was visible for miles. Additionally, Pergamos devoted three huge temples to pagan emperor-worship. This worship of the emperor will be revived in the last days as the whole world worships the antichrist.

In 133 BC, Attalus III bequeathed the city to the Roman Empire. It was the first city to build a temple to the divinity of Julius Caesar in 29 BC. The Lord refers to Himself in this letter as He which hath the sharp sword with two edges (2:12). In Roman thinking, the sword was the symbol of the highest order of official authority invested in the proconsul of Asia. The "right of the sword" was similar to the power of life and death. The governors of provinces were divided into a higher and lower class, according to whether or not they were invested with this power. The twin heresies of Nicolaitanism and Balaamism had made sharp inroads in the Pergamos church, so Jesus emphasized He must come to them cutting these out with the double-edged sword proceeding from His mouth. The Lord wears this symbol of supreme authority.

The problem at Pergamos is clericalism, setting up a separate caste in the church to officiate in matters of religious significance. This seems to have been at the root of Nicolaitanism. That which was called a *deed* in the letter to Ephesus (2:6) is accepted as a *doctrine* or *teaching* at Pergamos.

The letter to Pergamos brings into focus the idea of the patronized church. The phrase "the doctrine (or teaching) of Balaam" sums up what happened. The Christians of Pergamos were enticed by Satan's servants to join the world and its pleasures for a season.

Rev 2:12 The title Jesus uses of Himself here, (He who has the sharp two-edged sword) indicates that things are tough here.

The very word "Pergamos" has in it the same root from which we get our English words for bigamy and polygamy. It is the word for marriage. "Pergamos" signifies a mixed marriage in the most objectionable sense of the word, because it is the marriage of the organization of the church of Jesus with the world in defiance of the distinct command of the Spirit in II Cor 6:14-18, which reads:

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

"I will dwell in them and walk among them;
And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.

"And do not touch what is unclean;
And I will welcome you.

18 "And I will be a father to you,
And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"
Says the Lord Almighty. NASB

A yoke is an instrument binding the two together to walk the same path. It means to "walk in agreement." See also Matt 7:15-23.

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' NASB

Judge them by their fruit and do not get involved (be yoked) with anyone who does not produce good fruit because they will lead you to the broad path of destruction. Satan can work more effectively by counterfeiting the truth than openly denying it. Dressing in "sheep's clothing" also tells us they pose as God's servants and it is imperative that we examine their fruit. There are some churches today that are under the law by their choice and Jesus does not know them because they put the emphasis on works, not the cross!

Rev 2:13 Outwardly, the Pergamos church was the dwelling where Satan's throne was located. The Greek word is clearly "throne," but the translators of the original KJV softened it down to "seat." Let us not be afraid of the phrase. It is Satan's throne!

It should be noted that Alexander Hislop in his book, *The Two Babylon's*, traces the removal of the Babylonian priesthood to Pergamos. There is, therefore, a distinct connection between the ancient devil worship of Babylon and Pergamos where Satan's throne was declared at one time to be.

In view of all the terrible implications of the presence of Satan's throne in a city, it can readily be seen that the risen Lord is not complimenting the church at Pergamos when He tells them that they are dwelling near that throne.

How did the world come to fall in love with the church? See John 15:18-19.

18 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. NASB

The world hates us because we are chosen by God and are no longer part of the world. The true church convicts the world. It follows logically that when the world came to love

the church, the church had first become part of the world. The church the world loves is the church that compromised its position with the world.

Jesus gives them a compliment, but tells them that they are right where Satan lives. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air" and, as such, no doubt has a throne somewhere in the heavenlies. Look at Eph 2:1-2

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the 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. NASB

He is also "the ruler of this world" and, as such, maintains a throne somewhere on earth. In John's day, it was at Pergamos. Look at John 12:31

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. NASB

Satan was "overcome" at Messiah's death and resurrection.

The faithful Christians at Pergamos were confessing the blessed name of Jesus in the very capitol city of Satan's power structure on earth.

Rev 2:14 We find Balaam in Numbers, chapters 22-33. Balaam is an interesting guy. The word Balaam means, "the destroyer of the people." The New Testament speaks of the "way" of Balaam and the "error" of Balaam. In both cases, they are speaking of his greed or willingness to prophecy for hire. These references are found in 2 Peter 2:15

forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, NASB

and

Jude 11

Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. NASB

Balaam was a Gentile prophet with a most remarkable understanding of truth, a thorough knowledge of the character of God, a deep insight into the future of Israel, and he possessed a commendable desire to die the death of the righteous. His two fatal lusts were for wealth and women. He is consistently held up to us in the New Testament as an outstanding example of an apostate.

Look up Numbers 22:4-6

4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this horde will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 5 So he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the River, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, "Behold, a people came out of Egypt; behold, they cover the surface of the land, and they are living opposite me. 6 Now, therefore, please come, curse this people for me since they are too mighty for me; perhaps I may be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed." NASB

It is believed that Pethor is about 360 miles from Moab. Chuck Missler says that Balaam means "the destroyer" or "destroyer of the people." Beor means "to burn" or "consume." Balak was serious about what he wanted to do, but God will not permit his goal to be accomplished. See verses Num 22:14-15.

14 And the leaders of Moab arose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refused to come with us." 15 Then Balak again sent leaders, more numerous and more distinguished than the former. NASB

Balaam has the gift of prophecy. He can really bless and curse. Balak gets the idea he can bribe Balaam to curse Israel. Now turn to Num 31:15-18

15 And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women? 16 "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD. 17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man intimately. 18 But all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves. NASB

Why would God do this? These people deliberately made use of sin as a weapon against God's people. From this we should learn God would have us exterminate sinful lusts and not compromise. Balak is trying to undo Israel. His first attempt was to hire Balaam to curse Israel and that didn't work. It seems harsh that God permitted this, but what we must realize is that the people deliberately made use of sin as a weapon against God's people. From this we should learn God would have us exterminate sinful lusts and not compromise our position in Jesus. Israel was camped by Moab. Balaam told Balak that he should have the women go to the boarders by Israel and entice the men of Israel. If they could get the Israelite men to lie with the Moabite women, they could also introduce the Moabite gods to Israel and as a result of that idolatry, God would punish Israel. That is the insight we need to understand Rev 2:14. Satan is getting the church to compromise with sin; to tolerate sin in the body.

The doctrine of Balaam, as summarized by Jesus in His letter to Pergamos, was in three parts. It was characterized first by the wisdom of this world. Balaam taught Balak how to use the holiness of God's character for his own evil ends. Just as many today abuse the grace of God, so Balaam taught Balak how to abuse the government of God.

His doctrine was also characterized by the worship of this world. His philosophy was simple: involve the children of Israel with idolatry and judgment will be swift and sure.

The fact that a large segment of the professing church has espoused idolatry makes the judgment of Christendom certain and sure. The doctrine of Balaam, in its broadest aspect, is to bring some object between the soul and God.

Balaam's doctrine was also characterized by the wickedness of this world. He taught Balak to persuade Israel to commit fornication. The doctrine of Balaam suggests simply that the wicked practices of the world are not really sinful and can be employed as a means of gaining an end. Look at Isa 5:20

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;

Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! NASB

This is the definition of blasphemy. So, the doctrine of Balaam was really an attack upon the standards of separation and sanctification God expected Israel to maintain.

Pergamum was the official capitol of Asia. It was also the religious center. When Cyrus conquered Babylon, the Babylonian priests moved their headquarters from Babylon to Pergamum. About 378 AD it was moved to Rome. At the time of John, it was still at Pergamum. That is where Satan's throne was. In the early church there was a big deal about sacrificing to idols. I Cor 10 and II Cor 6 deal with the whole issue of meat being sacrificed to idols. The idea of spiritual fornication is tied into this.

As we go through these seven letters, we are looking at the spiritual condition of these seven churches as Jesus sees them. These seven letters also portray church history. The letter to Ephesus appears to portray the early apostolic church. It was the church that kept itself pure doctrinally, but ultimately lost its first love.

It is succeeded by the church at Smyrna, which is the church being persecuted - first by organized Judaism and then by the state in which it resided, which was Rome. There was a cycle of persecution by the Romans that covered ten emperors and 250 years. In 312 AD there were two military leaders that have a battle in Northern Italy. They are Maxentius (phonetic) and Constantine. Constantine makes a vow and subsequently wins this battle and becomes the Roman Emperor at that time. He promoted the story that he saw a vision of Jesus and had a banner that said "In This Sign Conquer." As a result of this vow he makes Christianity the state religion. He made it legal. Up until this time, Christianity was illegal. On the surface, this sounds good. But all of the pagan priests slipped into new roles in Christianity. All of the pagan holidays were incorporated into Christianity. What Satan could not accomplish by persecution, he accomplished by having them "marry" the world. Pergamum indicates "mixed marriage" or "second marriage." The church at Pergamum speaks to the church that married the world. God calls His people to be separated from the world. When separated, they are underground and persecuted. Satan used Constantine to have Christianity become wrapped in the Babylonian trappings of the ancient idolatrous system. This gives us a little feeling why Jesus selects the name for Himself that He did in verse 12. Pergamum is where Satan dwells, it is his throne. Jesus makes reference to the Old Testament example where Balaam gets Israel to become unfaithful, not to be separate, but to partake of the world and thus take upon themselves fornication, not just of the flesh but spiritual fornication. They are partaking of idols.

Rev 2:15-16 There is another idea introduced in verse 15. Nicolaitans show up and also in 2:6. Jesus commended the Ephesians because they also hated the works of the Nicolaitans. As we mentioned before, some scholars hold this as an un-translated word or combination of words. NICAOS means to "overcome." It is the same as in the promises to the "overcomer." LAITAN is the word in the Greek that we get the word "laity" from. The idea of the Nicolaitan is the beginning of the clergy, those that would lead over the flock. We know what Jesus had in mind in reference to church structure. In John 13-17 Jesus taught His "inner circle" the organizational principles of the church and He started

by washing the disciples feet. He was looking for a shepherd to minister, not a boss to be in charge. Jesus is to be running things and we are to be shepherds. What must have first been only a tendency of a small group, to perhaps establish a priesthood and greater and lesser levels within the church, now had the force of real doctrine. The wretched excesses of the Crusades and the Inquisitions were the result of an all-powerful clergy coming down without restraint or scriptural sanction on the believers and unbelievers of whatever district they superintended.

We have made hierarchies of church officials on a regular basis in utter opposition to the Scriptures, and then we must rebuff or even revolt against their policies as to the conduct of the church.

See Matt 18:1-7.

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, 3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; 6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! NASB

"Jesus confronts the tendency of humankind to associate authority with an exercise of dominance over others. The dominion or authority in kingdom life God wants to reinstate in us, is for victorious, fruitful living and for the overthrow of hellish powers, not for gaining control of others or for serving our own interests. His call to childlike humility and a servant like heart (John 13:1-17) establishes the spirit and style by which the authority of the believer is to be exercised as an agent of God's kingdom power. (See Matt 19:14, Mark 10:14-15, Luke 18:16-17)" (Spirit Filled Bible)

Rev 2:17 A white stone was apparently used as a ballot in a jury trial in their culture. A black stone meant guilty and a white stone meant innocent. Also, there is some record of a white stone being given to a slave who was set free as a symbol of his freedom. There are also stories where white stones were given as symbols after victory. There is another possibility and that is of hospitality. There was a practice of giving a white stone with the name of the giver as a symbol of hospitality to succeeding generations. If I gave you a white stone with my name or family crest on it, and you went away for a period of time, when you returned, if you presented this stone to my children, they would be honor bound to receive you with hospitality. None of this comes out of scripture, it is tradition. One interesting fact is the city of Pergamum had as its city symbol a black meteorite. Maybe the white stone is in contrast to this?

The "white stone" could also refer to the wilderness experience. In the breastplate of the high priest were woven twelve different precious stones, each inscribed with the name of

one of the twelve tribes (Ex 28:15-21). None of these were white stones, however. The white stone presumably is a sparkling diamond, perhaps answering to the Urim ("lights") also worn in Aaron's breastplate (Lev 8:8). In any case, all were worn by the high priest when he would enter into the holy place into the presence of the Lord. He alone could then have access to the ark of the covenant wherein was the hidden manna. (Ex 16:33, Heb 9:4) It was there as a reminder to future generations how God had fed His people in the wilderness. Jesus had already made it clear that this hidden manna represented Him. Turn to John 6:51.

"I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh." NASB

Jesus is announcing His mission right up front. To eat of the hidden manna is to express in a symbolic way that the overcomer may feast upon Jesus in the hidden place. The wicked would prefer the luxurious banquet of the world, spread with all that would appeal to carnal appetite, and which is deliberately served to insult the living God. The saint of God would prefer to be alone with the Lord enjoying spiritual food.

Revelation 2:18-29.

In Chapter 2:18-29 we find the Church at Thyatira.

The city of Thyatira is called *Ak-hissar* in modern Turkey. It was founded as a Greek colony by Seleucus Nicator, the founder of the Greek-Syrian monarchy that followed the death of Alexander the Great. He named it Thyatira in commemoration of his daughters' birth. Thyatira itself was once a great military city. One of its primary gods was Tyrimnas, depicted as a warrior armed for battle with a great two-edged axe. The only other time Thyatira is mentioned in the New Testament is in Acts 16:14, which speaks of Lydia. It is within the bounds of possibility that the church at Thyatira was founded through the testimony of a woman. Paul's first convert in Europe was a woman from Asia Minor, from Thyatira. This is recorded in Acts 16:14-15.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. NASB

Thyatira was the false church. The church tolerated sin within its community without resisting it to the fullest. Men often think they have gotten away with sin because God mercifully delays His punishment for a time. However, after giving him "time to repent," God's judgment will always catch up with him.

The reference to Jezebel points us back to the Old Testament tyrant who officially introduced the abominations of Baal-worship, together with its idolatries, cruelties, and priest-craft, into Ahab's kingdom.

Some scholars feel that the phrase "that woman Jezebel" makes reference to the papal church (Roman Catholic).

In 2:18 Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of God, and this is the only place in Revelation where He is so called.

We will also find that the end of this letter is different and the remaining three end differently than the first three. Here Jesus gives the promise before referring to those who have an ear and the next three are this way. This is also the first letter where Jesus refers to His second coming (verse 25).

Thyatira and the other three churches coming, on one hand, have historical origins that are in a sequence and these endure until the end.

To get an understanding of this letter, we need to know something about Jezebel. She was the daughter of the King of Sidon. She married Ahab, King of Israel. Sidon is Phoenicia and it was a maritime community and a trade union was developed. We have the sense here also of marrying to the world. We'll see the results of marrying to the world for Ahab, Israel and the church. The time of Ahab and Jezebel are, by scripture, the worst in the Old Testament. See I Kings 16:31-33.

31 And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. 32 So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. NASB

Here we find the King of Israel worshipping idols.

Jezebel is rightly chosen as a symbol of the days of Thyatira because of the nature of Jezebel's office and claims. It is to be noted that the risen Lord states that Jezebel "calls herself a prophetess." (2:20 NASB) That was her own assumption. She was self appointed. She was an idolatrous queen - prophetess, never. By the choice of Ahab, she occupied the throne of Israel. Her pretension of religious leadership was in line with her character.

This is the logical climax of ecclesiasticism. It begins with the deeds of the Nicolaitans; the deeds are transformed to doctrine; the clergy is married to the world and exalted over it in power and it then pretends to speak for God. We are never to forget this evolution.

Look also at I Kings 21:1-2.

1 Now it came about after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money." NASB

Naboth was probably one of the 7,000 that would not bow in 1 Kings 19:18.

In verse 1, the KJV refers to the Plain of Jezreel. This is Armageddon. Ahab was straight forward and fair enough. Continue on with 1 King 21:3

But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." NASB

Naboth says it would be wrong because the land is an inheritance and actually the Lord owns the land. Naboth was being obedient to the law in Num 36:7

Read 1 King 21:4-7.

4 So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?" 6 So he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you a vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." NASB

Notice in verse 7 who is running things. It's not Ahab! Pay attention to the method Jezebel uses to get the vineyard. She wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal and sent the letters to the elders in the city where Naboth lived.

Continue with 1 King 21:8-14.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city. 9 Now she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death. "

11 So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them. 12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people. 13 Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones. 14 Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned, and is dead." NASB

Get two witnesses to testify against him and kill him. The punishment for blasphemy was stoning. Apparently at times Israel would fast to repent of sin in the land. Jezebel did this to trick them into thinking they were doing something good.

Continue on in 1 Kings 21:15-29.

15 And it came about when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." 16 And it came about when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it. 19 And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD,' Have you murdered, and also taken possession?' "And you shall speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD," In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs shall lick up your blood, even yours. "" 20 And Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD. 21 Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; 22 and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you have made Israel sin. 23 And of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.' 24 "The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven shall eat."

25 Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him. 26 And he acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.

27 And it came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently. 28 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days." NASB

Even the "Ahab's" of this world find a merciful God. The prophecy against Jezebel (VS 23) was fulfilled in II Kings 9:30-37.

Look up Jer 7:18

"The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out libations to other gods in order to spite Me. NASB

The "queen of heaven" is the Assyrian and Babylonian god "Istar." This is also a title given to Mary by the Catholic Church. Here, and also in Jer 44:15-30, we find the

expression, "queen of heaven." This is a Babylonian phrase. Jezebel allowed herself to be worshipped as the queen of heaven. It is a title ascribed to a Babylonian goddess named SYMARAMUS (phonetic). It is associated with Nimrod and the founding of Babylon. One of the names of the province we know as Thyatira was Symaramus. It was named after the Babylonian queen of heaven.

In Pergamum, Symaramus is Asherah of the Phoenicians - Isoas, of Egypt - Aphrodite of the Greeks - and Venus of Rome. This all the same idea. The word Asthorith in scripture is translated groves. Throughout scripture we find the words idolatry and fornication used as a synonym. This is evident when you study pagan practices of idolatry.

See Deut 16:21

“You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the LORD your God. NKJV

Israel was forbidden to erect altars among groves. To us, this sounds like they shouldn't put altars among the trees. Now turn to Judg 2:11-13

11 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; 12 and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. 13 They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. NKJV

Here we find the Ashtoreths. This was the result of their alliance with the Canaanites. See also Judges 10:6 Also, see 1 Sam 31:8-10, 1 Kings 11:5 & 31-33, 2 Kings 23:13. In 2 Kings 23, this is also equated to the admonition of the Sidonians. What the groves were, were phallic symbols. They were trees that had been carved and denoted fertility rites. They included in their worship all kinds of sexual practices. There is in history, in the minds of the practitioners, an identity between sexual impurity and the failure to worship God. This is why Hosea refers to Israel as the adulterous wife of Jehovah in the sense Israel went "whoring" after these false gods after being married to Jehovah God.

Jezebel presents herself as the king running things and also present herself as the Phoenician queen of her religion which is enforced in Israel. (Baal worship - the queen of heaven)

Now look at the letter to the church at Thyatira.

The Lord has a double message for the church at Thyatira, which suffered from having a “double congregation.” Evidently the church contained a faction that were far too worldly, backsliding into sins similar to those at Pergamos, but a believing remnant were also to be found.

Rev 2:18 Who is speaking? The Son of God as opposed to the queen of heaven. Remember from chapter 1 when we saw fire and bronze spoke of judgment? Jesus presents Himself with authority and with a heavy hand. As the Lord looks at Thyatira and sees what a harvest of wickedness will grow from this Satanic seed being sown by

the woman Jezebel, the shoes on His feet are bronze. Judgment must begin in the house of God.

Rev 2:19 Jesus evaluates our actions. Look at 1 Sam 2:3

"Boast no more so very proudly,
Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth;
For the LORD is a God of knowledge,
And with Him actions are weighed. NASB

Jesus says this church has love, faith, service and perseverance. This is good. Notice also that it is increasing. The only thing wrong with the church at Thyatira is that they don't protest something that is among them. Notice the emphasis on works. Works are well and good in their proper place, but they become a deadly peril when they come between the soul and Jesus. Worship, in Scripture, comes before service. The Lord says "Come" before He says "Go."

Rev 2:20 The sins of Thyatira are those mentioned in connection with Pergamos (Rev 2:14) but in this case are identified with Jezebel rather than Balaam. Balaam encouraged worldliness but Jezebel advocated the deadlier sin of idolatry.

We no longer chase after gods like Baal in our modern churches, but rather gods like buildings, money and social prestige. But it's all the same to God. Idolatry is idolatry, the spiritual form of adultery.

The Lord notes that in the case of Thyatira opportunity for repentance was given but not taken. (Rev 2:21) The church had in its midst a malignant heresy that struck at the very center of all that was good and holy, and they tolerated it. The application of this to our day is evident. We are living in a most tolerant age. Everyone must be allowed to "do his own thing." Jezebel was the cause of a vast turning to "whoredoms and witchcraft's" in Israel in the days of Elijah as well as Baal-worshipping idolatry. Look at 1 Kings 16:30-33

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. 31 And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. 32 So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab also made the Asherah. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. NASB

and

2 Kings 9:22-23

And it came about, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "Is it peace, Jehu?" And he answered, "What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?" NASB

This Jezebel had, under the disguise of promoting a spirituality in the soul, promoted carnality in the life, no doubt stressing "love" while degrading "doctrine" and "separation" (as multitudes of churches do today), and justifying this teaching by

asserting she had received it by supernatural revelation. Remember, Jezebel called herself a prophetess – God didn't.

Rev 2:21 Is Jesus speaking of Jezebel in the Old Testament? I don't believe so, it was written to the church. There was an active "personage" in the church. Remember Daniel 10 where we see spirits behind the earthly powers.

Rev 2:22-23 Judgment is prophesied upon the church. It is definitely stated here that Jezebels' form of Christianity shall pass through the great tribulation (vs. 22). We will see, however, when we come to the message to the church of Philadelphia, that the real believers will be kept from the hour of tribulation that is to come upon the earth. Suffice it to say, that God here promises to give to everyone according to his works: to those who follow Jezebel, great tribulation; to those who work the work of God, believing on Christ whom He hath sent there will be glory. Read John 6:29

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." NASB

Faith is what God requires. They are to receive the morning star. The Lord Jesus Himself explains this statement further in the Revelation.

We'll read later in Revelation of Mystery Babylon. We'll see this "harlot" that rides the nations of the earth. It is a religious system that has mislead the world with her "whoredoms." This does not necessarily point to the Papal system or the Catholic Church. Chapters 17-18 will help explain this. Whatever it is, it is at least an outgrowth of this and this is part of it. Mystery Babylon is a worldwide, unified church and has heavenly idolatries.

Notice the promises in these verses. If they don't repent, they *will* be cast into the great tribulation. What is going to destroy the harlot later in Revelation? She rides the seven headed, ten horn beast; this political system. What turns on her before this is over? The very beast she is riding. She is cast here into a bed of great suffering. There is a promise here of being cast into this tribulation UNLESS they repent. There is an implied idea here that some are going into the great tribulation and some are not. The ones that do are the ones that don't repent. Question: who doesn't go and why don't they go? In Scripture, salvation is always according to faith; judgment is always according to works. The classic passage on this is Romans 2:1-16. We'll see more of this before we are done with these letters.

Look up Jer 17:10

I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds. NASB

The heart is incurable. Nowhere in scriptures does God heal the heart. He will give us a new heart, but He doesn't heal the old one. When we are born again we are created new. God also searches the minds and the hearts and rewards according to what He finds. Here, (Rev) Jesus claims He is the one who searches the minds and the heart. Here is

another verse that identifies Jesus as God. Also, notice they will be rewarded according to their works. Anytime we see this, it isn't good. The whole concept of the tragedy of the unsaved is that they will be judged by their own standards.

Rev 2:24 Jezebel and her followers are "they," not "you." Even though they dominate the church, they are not really in the church, as Jesus views it, and are destined for destruction in a fast-approaching time of great tribulation. The true believers are to persevere despite the influence of the backsliding portion of the church and the world around them. But the believers of Thyatira had satisfied their Savior, a spiritual position to be desired by every one of us.

Obviously what was involved in this Babylonian system of occult worship is the idea of being somehow involved in the deep mysteries of Babylon and of the universe. The same here is present in all occult practices. It started in Gen 3 where the serpent appealed to Eve.

The word translated "deep things" (NASB) or "deep secrets" (NIV) is BATHOS, like a bath or sphere, a diving bell and here refers to the deep things or secrets of Satan. The word "burden" is BAROS. They both come from the root word we know as "basis."

Rev 2:25 What ever the church at Thyatira represents, unlike Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum, it will endure in some form until Jesus' returns.

This is the first explicit reference in the seven letters to the return of Jesus, His second coming.

Rev 2:26-29 Here the order of the promises is reversed from the previous letters.

Jesus tells them, it is power over the nations that they want, He is the one who gives it to them. It is NOT an ecclesiastical system. He quotes a commitment that is given in Psalm 2. See Psalms 2:1-3

1 Why are the nations in an uproar,
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His
Anointed:
3 "Let us tear their fetters apart,
And cast away their cords from us!" NASB

Psalm 2 is a conversation between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Verses 1-3 are what the world says. As in Armageddon, the people knowingly take up arms against the Lord and His anointed. The nations are against God and His anointed and want to free themselves from God.

Continue on with Psalms 2:4-9

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,

The Lord scoffs at them.
5 Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury:
6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son,
Today I have begotten Thee.
8'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.
9'Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.'" NASB

In verses 4-6 it is the Father speaking. In verses 7-9 Jesus speaks of the promise the Father gave Him. Verse 8 starts in Rev 5 and continues into the millennium. The Lord reaches out and takes that possession.

Verse 9 is linked to an identity with Jesus. Notice in the letter to Thyatira that He includes in His own, the joint heirship of this (verse 27).

In Psalm 2:10-12 the Holy Spirit speaks. Ps 2:10-12
10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
11 Worship the LORD with reverence,
And rejoice with trembling.
12 Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! NASB

We know from Ephesians and Colossians that we are joint heirs with Jesus. Notice in Rev 2:27 "He" is the overcomer. As overcomers, we will rule in the manner with Jesus. We don't normally see ourselves joining with Jesus ruling with a rod of iron, but that is what it says. Indeed in the kingdom to come, when all accounts of the Church age are in, some Christians virtually unknown in this world will reign as virtual kings. But too often we lose sight of the fact that there are magnificent rewards in the age to come, and that that ages is the real point of the Christian faith. It is not so much that we should desire importance of sway over our fellow men, but rather that we fully realize that a resurrection to greater things is the ultimate reward of all who hold fast to the faith. The fact that the King is coming separates the true faith from all other of men's ideas on how to please God. The Lord holds up to the faithful at Thyatira the very best of all His blessings in order to bolster them in their walk. In the end, the true believers will get Jesus Himself, His love, His compassion, His company, His intimacy. Look at Rev 2:28 and then turn ahead to Rev 22:16.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." NASB

In considering the situation of Thyatira we have a simple choice to make. Which of us would prefer a relationship with Jezebel to a relationship with Jesus?

Each of the seven letters has a promise that "he that overcomes, I will give" whatever. What does it mean to overcome? Is this an opening to the doctrine of perfection? How do you overcome? 1 John 5:5 tells us. 1 John 5:5

And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? NASB

Here is John, the one who penned the Book of Revelation explaining what it is to overcome. It has nothing to do with works except in the sense your works will be evidence of your faith in Him that did overcome. You overcome by believing - not by doing.

When is this promise to the overcomers of Thyatira to be fulfilled? There is to be a literal kingdom. We who have believed and who form the invisible Church of this age are to come back with the Lord. See Jude 14.

And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, NASB

The overcomer is to exercise the power of Jesus upon the earth.

What a message for our day! The Lord is coming. He is to take us out of the world before its hour of tribulation. We are to go to be with Him. We are to return--not as Jezebel, the false queen, but as the bride, loved by the husband, joined to Him as one. This is why the Savior came, choosing and cleansing the Church, presenting it to Himself glorified without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. This is the fulfillment of the great mystery of the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church. Paul comments on this in Eph 5:22-32

22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. NASB

There is a spiritual bond between the Father and the Son and also there is a spiritual bond between Messiah and the church.

CHAPTER 3

Rev 3:1-6 The city of Sardis was the capital of Croesus, an extremely wealthy ancient monarch. The city may have received its name from the Sardis stones found in this area that were commonly used as pagan charms to drive away evil spirits. Sardis has a big blank where they should have a commendation. There is nothing good said about this church. The church at Sardis provides us the sad picture of the grand old church building that once was filled with joyful believers but now is dying and almost empty. These churches are to be found nearly everywhere and they typically suffer from a want of good teaching and truly spiritual leadership. The believers can't get anything when they come so they simply don't come. This church became caught up in materialism and carnal concerns. Though they boast in their outward accomplishments, God's verdict is that their spiritual life was almost extinguished. The church in Sardis is the church of uncompleted works.

Sardis means "remnant." This letter has the same theme as Paul's letter to the Romans. Sardis was the fruitless church. Evidently most of the members were professing Christians, but not truly regenerate, and thus only going through the motions of religion. It is very significant that the Lord speaks to Sardis as the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. This goes back to the vision of the first chapter (1:4, 16, 20) where these symbols are explained, which is the perfect work of the Spirit and the full Church in every century and in every climate.

In other words, here is the reassertion that the Lord Jesus wishes to control His Church by the effective work of the Holy Spirit! See 1 Cor. 1:4-5.

4 I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, NASB

It is interesting that Paul starts out this way considering the issue Paul is going to address. The issue here is grace, not position. Look also at 1 Cor 12:4-13.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7 But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. NASB

Every believer has at least one spiritual gift but no one has all of them. We need each other to be complete. Now look at 1 Cor 14:33.

for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
NASB

The spiritual gifts are always to be under control. God is not the author of confusion. If there is confusion, something is out of order. The analogy drawn in Corinthians lies in the fact that the Church is presented as a body. The human body is directed by a governing spirit. When the human spirit does not control some part of the body, there is said to be a partial paralysis. The Holy Spirit should govern and direct the Church which is the Body of Christ. From the beginning the Lord had announced that He would send the Holy Spirit to lead and guide His Church.

One commentary puts it this way: “The city of Sardis was once the capital of Lydia, the seat of the wealthy Croesus. Looked at from a little distance to the north in the open plain, Sardis had a haughty, unconquerable aspect, dominating the majestic, broad valley of the Hermus from its stronghold on a steep spur that stood out in bold relief from the great mountains on the south. But close up, the hill was nothing but mud, slightly compacted, crumbling under the influences of the weather, ready to tumble from the slightest disturbance. It was an appearance without reality, an outward show of strength undermined by neglect and careless confidence. The history of Sardis had been one of glory, yet it was a glory tarnished by unreliability and failure. Twice during its history it had fallen to plundering enemies because of its lack of watchfulness. Here is a daily battle against spiritual fatigue. Likewise, the church at Sardis is characterized by the Lord as having a great name for being alive, whereas actually, it was dead.”

In Sardis, they also had the problem of liberalism. Sardis had a great reputation as a live, dynamic, successful church, but from God's point of view it was actually dead. The idea of death in a church expresses that the people are living strictly in the flesh. It is the flesh that dies; the spirit never dies.

The Lord hasn't given up on Sardis, and He points to some things in the church that are sick but not dead as yet. The Lord urges the congregation to reclaim those spiritual works that are not dead and He gives clear warning that nothing less than the Second Coming and the Kingdom hang in the balance.

In Roman times, it was the common practice for cities to keep a roll of its citizens. Unworthy citizens had their names erased from the register; those who performed some exploit had their names written in gold. A hint of this is seen in the Lord's promise to the overcomer not to erase or blot out his name from the book of life. (Verse 5)

Notice verse 3. The Lord called for a threefold remembrance. The Lord is always calling our wandering thoughts and affections back to Himself. His last act before He went to Calvary was to institute a feast of remembrance to draw us back to Himself again and again during our walk on earth.

"Become vigilant; wake up." It is not merely the call to be awake; it is to remain awake, to keep a vigil as a watchman in the midst of a sleeping encampment. There is in the word the idea of a continuing alertness. The implication is to become watchful. The remedy for being lethargic and routine in our religion is an awakening to the imminence of Jesus' return.

The second exhortation is that the one who becomes vigilant should strengthen the remnant that is about to go into this death sleep. Turn to Jer 6:17-19

17 "And I set watchmen over you, saying,

'Listen to the sound of the trumpet!'

But they said, 'We will not listen.'

18 "Therefore hear, O nations,

And know, O congregation, what is among them.

19 "Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people,

The fruit of their plans,

Because they have not listened to My words,

And as for My law, they have rejected it also. NASB

There is a danger then that some church members will not be part of the Lord's plans for the future. He made this point most emphatically in the Gospels, saying that there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth at the end and that He will have to tell some "I never knew you." It is not enough therefore, at least in the case of Sardis, to just keep coming to a dying church. Look at what Messiah said in Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' NASB

There are false prophets in our churches. They have an intellectual assent to the letter of scripture but not with the heart (Rom 10:10). They don't bring Jesus into it.

See Hebrews 13:7

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. NASB

and Heb 13:17

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. NASB

If yieldedness to the spiritual is commanded in the epistle to the Hebrews, faithfulness on the part of the leaders is commanded here as in other passages where the elders and overseers are exhorted. There is no hint of what the world today would call "the clergy" but rather it does hint at Phil 2:3b, "Let each esteem the other better than themselves." Esteem is: hegeomai (hayg-eh'-om-ah-ee); middle voice of a (presumed) strengthened form of 71; to lead, i.e. command (with official authority); figuratively, to deem, i.e. consider: KJV-- account, (be) chief, count, esteem, governor, judge, have the rule over, suppose, think.

The first work required of any individual is to believe in the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior. Look at John 6:29

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." NASB

The work that God requires is faith. Following this, we are to live in yieldedness to the Holy Spirit to maintain good works not for salvation, but because we have already been saved. James 2:14-17

14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. NASB

Faith that saves *must* change us! Jesus showed us how to love by climbing on the cross and dying for us. Messiah asks us to love each other in action.

The truest sign of they dying church are missing Bibles. It is a safe assumption that Sardis had its troubles because it simply didn't know the Word. A church cannot die if it is carrying out the Word of God. The faith will be there and the works will be there. Let's go back to Matt 7:15-18

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? 17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. NASB

We have a work to witness and that work must be completed. God is calling out a people for His Name and He is using human voices for the calling. But keep in mind that Satan can work more effectively by counterfeiting the truth than he can by openly opposing it. Dressing in "sheep's clothing" also tells us that Satan's ministers pose as God's servants and it is imperative we examine their fruit and that we also be extremely careful as to the fruit we produce.

In all ages, the Church has received and heard in the same way. When one is born again, one receives the Holy Spirit. He comes to dwell in the human heart. The receiving has to do with the Person of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as He comes in all His fullness to take up His abode in the believing heart which becomes His temple.

The manner of hearing of the Gospel refers to the doctrine of Jesus. See Romans 10:17.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. NKJV

Some translations have "by the word of Christ," but the original Greek has "by the word of God." The word translated "word" here is: rhema (hray'-mah); from 4483; an utterance (individually, collectively or specifically); by implication, a matter or topic (especially of narration, command or dispute);... What this means for us is that as we read and study Scripture, God pulls certain verses out of the Bible that meet our individual needs and as a result, faith is developed in our lives.

There is also a warning given to those who will not watch. The image of the thief who comes by surprise is from 1 Thes 5:1-11, where Paul discusses how the world will be unaware of the Lord's coming. 1 Thess 5:1-11

1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing. NASB

I believe that verse 9 refers to the church. We will be removed before the tribulation. Look also at 1 Thess 1:10

...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. NASB

The believer should never be unaware that the Lord is returning, but the world will be as unalert as a householder is of a thief in the night. The "Day of the Lord" is under discussion here and it indicates the entire period of the Tribulation, the Second Coming and the Millennial Kingdom. The Lord says He will come as a thief and that they will not know the hour. Does this tell us if we do watch and pray that we will know the time Jesus will come for us? This ties to Matt 24:32-33.

32 "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; 33 even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. NASB

The "fig tree" is symbolic of the nation of Israel. As the nation of Israel prospers, this will be a sign of the beginning. Prophetically speaking, if we want to know where we are in God's time-table, watch the nation of Israel. The Lord's second coming is not an isolated event, but a series of events. The heart of this message to Sardis is that those who trust in the fact that their names are written in some church book are dead. If they refuse to leave this death for life, if they remain in their unregenerate state, they will miss the Lord's coming. We are to be constantly watching and to be ready always.

Another idea is found in Matt 24:43.

"But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. NASB

The second coming of Jesus is likened to the coming of a thief, but that does not seem to be the thought here in Sardis. Here the thought is that the Lord will come suddenly upon this church, which has nothing but an empty reputation, and will break it up. What does a thief do? A thief comes to steal and to remove everything of value. Jesus will remove all that is valuable - the true church - the true believers. The Lord warns this local church that if there is not self-judgment, He will come suddenly and break up the testimony once and for all. It is a remarkable fact that western Asia Minor, now Turkey, was once the brightest spot on earth for gospel witness. Today it is one of the darkest.

Jesus already told us no man knows the day or the hour but this verse (Rev 3:3) We also saw this in Matt 24:32-33 and in 1 Thes 5:1-5 Paul tells us we should know the times and the seasons.

Also, in verse 5 (Rev 3:5), Jesus says He will not "erase" (NIV) or "blot out" (KJV) the name from the Book of Life to the one who overcomes. There was a series of examinations that the Rabbi had to submit to be qualified or disqualified for the priesthood. No special disqualification's for the Levitical office existed, though the Rabbis insist that a good voice was absolutely necessary. It was otherwise with the priest's office. The first inquiry instituted by the Sanhedrin, who for the purpose sat daily in "the hall of Polished Stones," was into the genealogy of the candidate. Certain genealogies were deemed authoritative. If he failed to satisfy the court about his being legitimate, the candidate was dressed and veiled in black, and permanently removed. If he passed that ordeal, inquiry was next made as to any physical defects, of which there were 140 that permanently, and 22 which temporarily disqualified the candidate for the exercise of the priestly office. Persons so disqualified were, however, admitted to menial offices, and entitled to Temple support. Those who had stood the twofold test were dressed in white raiment, and their names properly inscribed. To this allusion also is made in Rev 3:5.

What is the meaning of "blotting out" these names from the book of life? Are certain people saved for a while only to be lost forever when the judgment comes? The "Book of Life," according to Dr. Henry Morris, as its very name implies, probably contains the names of all those for whom Jesus died--in other words, all who have ever been conceived in the womb, and who thus have received God's created spirit of life. Once a person reaches the age of accountability and lives his life without making a decision for Jesus, when he dies, his name is removed from the "Book of Life." If he makes a decision (being born again) for Jesus, his name will be eternally found in the "Book of Life." One problem with this view shows up in Rev 13:8.

And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. NASB

Here we find that some people never had their names written in the Book of Life. To me, this would indicate that when a person makes a decision for Jesus, his name is then written in the Book of Life and to have it erased would indicate losing one's salvation. 1 Tim 4:1 gives clear teaching that in the end times some "will fall away..." One can't fall from a ship he isn't on. Look at the following verses that also seem to confirm this point:

Matt 24:4

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. NASB
If it wasn't possible to be misled, Jesus wouldn't have to warn us that it could happen.

Prov 14:6-9

6 A scoffer seeks wisdom, and finds none,
But knowledge is easy to him who has understanding.

7 Leave the presence of a fool,
Or you will not discern words of knowledge.

8 The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,
But the folly of fools is deceit.

9 Fools mock at sin,
But among the upright there is good will. NASB

We're told today that "I'm okay, you're okay." We are also told the whole world is full of sin – get over it – learn to live without guilt because everyone has the same problems.

Turn to Deut 13:1-5

1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' 3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. 5 But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you. NASB

One of the reasons we undergo tests is to see if we really love God (vs 3). But keep in mind that just because someone works a miracle, that alone doesn't prove they are God's representative! Ask by whose authority they work the miracle! Remember what we read in Matt 24 where Jesus said that false prophets will disguise themselves as sheep and infiltrate our churches for the purpose of leading astray all that they can.

Notice the word "name" appears three times in this letter. This is interesting in terms of denominationalism. Being concerned about your name; the banner under which you associate yourselves instead of what you're doing. What is Jesus' remedy for this? Notice the title He uses of Himself in the letter to Sardis. Remember chap 1:4 and Is 11:2. What do we know the seven spirits before the throne of God as? - The Holy Spirit. What is the name oriented church missing? - The Holy Spirit. They are in name only, but their church is dead.

The idea of having one's name blotted out of the Book of Life is not just a New Testament idea. In Ex 32:32 Moses mentions it.

But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin — and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!" NASB

Look at Ps 69:22-28.

22 May their table before them become a snare;
And when they are in peace, may it become a trap.
23 May their eyes grow dim so that they cannot see,
And make their loins shake continually.
24 Pour out Thine indignation on them,
And may Thy burning anger overtake them.
25 May their camp be desolate;
May none dwell in their tents.
26 For they have persecuted him whom Thou Thyself hast smitten,
And they tell of the pain of those whom Thou hast wounded.
27 Do Thou add iniquity to their iniquity,
And may they not come into Thy righteousness.
28 May they be blotted out of the book of life,
And may they not be recorded with the righteous. NASB

Psalm 69 is a Psalm of David that reflects the suffering Messiah. The word “they” (vs 28) in the Psalm refers to those who reject Jesus.

In the letter to Sardis, (3:1), Jesus says He knows their deeds, which would be their works, and adds that even though they have a reputation or a name for being alive, in the eyes of God, they are dead. Look again at Matt 7:21-23.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" NASB

Obedience means personal involvement. These false prophets are in our churches. These false prophets have an intellectual assent to the letter of Scripture but not “with the heart.” (Rom 10:10). They don’t bring Jesus into it. Some are willing to accept Jesus as Savior but not as Lord. They invent a God who treats sin lightly, who is willing to accept a few religious performances as compensation for their debt. They rely on works. This would tell us that their works are works of the flesh and God doesn't recognize the works of the flesh. An example of this is in Gen 22:2 where God commands Abraham to take his only son Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice. Gen 22:2

And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." NASB

Obviously this sets up the example of Jesus being offered on the cross, but notice the emphasis on the phrase "your only son, Isaac,..." Abraham had another son Ishmael who was the result of Abraham trying to fulfill God's promise in Gen 15:4.

Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." NASB

Ishmael was the result of a work of the flesh and God doesn't recognize or acknowledge works of the flesh.

For those who do obey and have their names written in the Book of Life, Jesus says He will confess them before The Father. I wonder if this could be understood as Jesus taking us personally and introducing us to The Father?

Walking with the Lord in white is a magnificent reward pictured at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Turn ahead to Rev 19:7-8

7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. NASB

The Bride of Christ, the faithful, will have pure white garments signifying their perfection before the Lord. The type goes all the way back to the Tabernacle and the garments of the priesthood. Pure white indicated absolute righteousness before God and so the costumes of the priests and the hangings of the Temple were instead sewn with colors – scarlet, blue and purple (sacrifice, heaven and royalty). The colors of Jesus had to be mixed with the white of the garments, indicating that the wearers were perfect only in Him. Ultimately we will be perfect in ourselves, our sins forgiven at the cross and our bad works burned away at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Look at 1 Cor 3:10-15

11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. NASB

The reward of white garments is inestimably and eternally significant. It goes to all true believers.

Next we have the letter to Philadelphia. (Rev 3:7-13) Nothing evil is said of this church.

Rev 3:7 This town still survives today as the town of Alasehir in Turkey. It is 30 miles inland from Sardis. King Attalus II- Philadelphus founded the city of Philadelphia in 140 BC. Philadelphia represents the missionary and evangelical church.

As we have mentioned before, in the seven letters Jesus starts each one giving a title of Himself. They all suggest judgment except the one to Philadelphia. His title here is "holy and true." This title is emphasized also in Rev 6:10. In Is 57:15 we find Jesus' name is "holy."

For thus says the high and exalted One
Who lives forever, whose name is Holy,
"I dwell on a high and holy place,
And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit
In order to revive the spirit of the lowly
And to revive the heart of the contrite. NASB

See also Is 57:1.

The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;
And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.

For the righteous man is taken away from evil, NASB

The Hebrew word for “perishes” is: 'acaph (aw-saf’); a primitive root; to gather for any purpose; hence, to receive, take away, i.e. remove (destroy, leave behind, put up, restore, etc.):... Here is a verse that indicates a pre-tribulation rapture. This is also a promise in Rev 3:10 to Philadelphia.

We also find God is called "true" in both the Gospel of John (17:3) and in 1 John 5:20.

John 17:3 reads:

"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. NASB

and 1 John 5:20

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. NASB

See also Is 22:20-24.

20 "Then it will come about in that day,
That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah
21 And I will clothe him with your tunic,
And tie your sash securely about him,
I will entrust him with your authority,
And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

22 "Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,
When he opens no one will shut,
When he shuts no one will open.

23 "And I will drive him like a peg in a firm place,
And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.

24 "So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars. NASB

Notice especially verse 22. Jesus uses this same phrase now applied to Himself in the letter to Philadelphia. (Rev 3:8) He is saying He has the key and what He opens, no one can shut, and what He shuts, no one can open. In Isaiah it is spoken of as an authority. In Revelation, it is spoken of as an active verb. It is not that He can do this - He does it. He is exercising His authority. What is being opened and shut? Generally you can build a case that what is being opened are missions, areas of witness, doors of opportunity.

As we saw, the reference to the Key of David comes from Is 22:22. In the Old Testament, this promise was given specifically to Eliakim, who was a high official and faithful servant under King Hezekiah. His predecessor, Shebna, had proved unfaithful in his service, so God was promising to give his position to Eliakim. The "key of the house of David" specifically referred to the keys to the treasuries of the kings of Judah, but

figuratively it also refers to all the great responsibilities of government which would thereby be resting upon him in an office essentially equivalent to that of prime minister. Eliakim alone, under the king, would be responsible--the government, like the heavy key-chain hanging from his shoulder, was to be upon him. The same prophetic promise had been made to the Savior in Isaiah 9:6-7. The government was to be upon His shoulder and He would occupy the throne of the house of David forever.

Thus, Eliakim was presented to the people in Hezekiah's Jerusalem as an actual visible type of the coming Messiah upon whose shoulders someday God would place eternally the kingdoms of all the world. The name Eliakim means "God raising up."

The concept of the "key of David" is also a covenant term. Look at Is 9:6-7.

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. NASB

Here we find the idea of the kingdom government involves the throne of David. One of the titles of the King that sits on David's throne is "Counselor." For a really interesting translation of these verses, we need to read them from the Septuagint:

6 For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose government is upon his shoulder: and his name is called the Messenger of great counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and heal to to him. 7 His government shall be great, and of his peace there is no end: it shall be upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish I, and to support if with judgment, and with righteousness, from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." LLX

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is called the "Word." Jesus reveals the Word of God to man. What more could a Counselor do? Look back at Rev 1:8.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." NASB

Philadelphia was the feeble church. The church at Philadelphia was weak, but it was wonderful. There is not the slightest hint of rebuke from the Lord; nothing but praise is given. First Messiah shows that the saints are under His control. The Lord saw their weakness, but He also saw their willingness. See Romans 12:1-2.

1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. NASB

All we can do is “yield.” This is the sole condition of the believer. All else is the work of the Holy Spirit. We were bought by the shed blood of Jesus and He owns us. Because of this, He opened doors of opportunity that no power on earth could shut.

As mentioned previously, the city was founded by Attalus, King of Pergamos, who intended to make Philadelphia a center of Greco-Asiatic civilization and a means of spreading the Greek language and customs in the eastern part of Lydia and Phrygia. It was a missionary city, founded to promote a unity of spirit, customs, and loyalty within the realm. It was a successful teacher. Before AD 19 the native tongue had ceased to be spoken in Lydia, and Greek was the only language of the country. The church in Philadelphia was a missionary-minded one, dedicated to the spread of the gospel.

Philadelphia commanded a key situation on the main line of communication between Rome and the central plateau of Asia Minor. Its strategic location made it possible for it to open or to close these lines of communication. The Lord reveals Himself in the letter to Philadelphia as He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth (3:7).

Rev 3:8 In Philadelphia we see the existence of revivalism in the church. Philadelphia represents the greatest recovery in the church since apostolic times. Because of this, it is also a practical church. The phrase "an open door" epitomizes the period. It suggests the era of revivals and missions. The “open door” also indicates that the church reaches out to its community and that people coming in will find Jesus there. It was a witnessing church that had kept Messiah’s Word and never denied His name. Having a good church is just that simple.

Look at the following three sections of scripture:

1 Cor 16:8-9

8 But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; 9 for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. NASB

2 Cor 2:12

Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, NASB

and Col 4:2-3

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;
3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; NASB

Here are three places where Paul uses the idiom of an open door to mean an open mission field. The Lord will open a ministry. It really makes no sense to go into a mission until the Lord has opened the door. Where Jesus opens a door the powers of Satan cannot shut it. If we walk in the power of the risen Jesus and put on the whole armor of God we will

be empowered to go through the open doors that Jesus sets before us. In Rev 3:8 Jesus tells them He placed before them an open door and they have done well.

There is another concept of a door that Jesus may be referring to that is found in the beginning of chapter 4. (Rev 4:1) This door is in heaven. From chapter 4 on, John is in heaven, not on the earth, and the church doesn't appear. The church is no longer mentioned as being on the earth. You will also notice that in the first three chapters of Revelation, Jesus doesn't refer to Himself as the "Lamb of God," but this phrase is used a lot later in the Jewish portion of the Book.

Jesus is pictured in the midst of the seven lampstands in 1:12-13. Jesus is among the church and He knows our works - all of them. We can look at 3:8 as Jesus telling them He opened up to them a mission and they have been faithful to that mission field, whatever it was. In this epistle alone, the works are not described in any way. It is evident that, whatever they are, they please the Lord. And the reason they please the Lord is that they proceed from an attitude of heart and life that finds its strength only in Jesus, its faith only in His Word, and its very basis for existence only in His name.

Rev 3:9 See Luke 22:28-30.

28 "And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; 29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. NASB

Luke 22:28-30 could possibly apply to this verse. This is the same idea here (3:9) as was in Rev 2:9. This was a common experience of the two faithful churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia; opposition from the false Jews of the so-called synagogue of Satan. Turn to Ps 122:1-5

1 A Song of Ascents, of David.
I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the LORD."
2 Our feet are standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem,
3 Jerusalem, that is built
As a city that is compact together;
4 To which the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD —
An ordinance for Israel —
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
5 For there thrones were set for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David. NASB

Note in verse 5 that the word "thrones" is plural.

Rev 3:10 This is an important and somewhat controversial verse, one of the key verses supporting the doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture of the believing church, as exemplified at Philadelphia.

Compare Rev 3:10 and 4:1 with Isaiah 26:20-21.

20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms,
And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while,
Until indignation runs its course.
21 For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
And the earth will reveal her bloodshed,
And will no longer cover her slain. NASB

It is interesting that here in Isaiah, there is a group of people the Lord calls His people and He calls them out of the earth until His wrath has passed. Also look at John 14:2-3.

2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. NASB

The KJV says they have kept the "work of His patience." The NIV says, "to endure patiently." The NASB reads "kept the word of My perseverance." For what? His return to get His church. Notice the promise that goes with this. They won't be on this earth at the time of the trial. I believe this is telling us that the true believers who have waited patiently for the return of Jesus will be removed before the tribulation. It is important that we appreciate that none of the other churches received this particular promise from the Lord, as if to say that the churches flawed with unbelief and heresy will endure the Tribulation. Why is this trial upon all the world? To "try" or to "test" them that dwell upon the earth. What is the purpose of this tribulation or trial? Turn to Judges 10:13-14.

13 Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods; therefore I will deliver you no more. 14 Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your distress." NASB

These verses in Judges are the purpose of the Great Tribulation in Revelation. In modern times we are also guilty of false gods. Israel was under the servitude of the Ammorites and Philistines. It was an 18 year judgment period. Judges, in the KJV, refers to the time of their tribulation. Judges did, on a local sense, but we'll discover as we study the players of Egypt and the gods they worshipped, that this may be what is going on between the seals and the trumpets, thunders, bowls, etc. This is representative of the earth and the world system.

We also discover a phrase in Rev 6:10, 8:13, 11:10, 13:3, 14:6, 17:2, 8 where we hear of the "earth dwellers." The word "dwell" means more than to just live there, it also means to identify with. See Phil 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; NASB
and Heb 11:13.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. NASB

God wants us to fix our eyes on Jesus. We are citizens of His state and are temporally in a foreign land. Where is our citizenship? In heaven! In reference to Heb 11:13, the KJV says we are to "embrace" them. We are to walk by faith – not by sight. This is not an

option – it is a command. There are a couple of groups of aliens on earth, of which we are one. We'll find another group in Rev 7.

The first three letters were organized in a similar way; that is, the promise to the overcomer came at the end or almost like a post script. None of them explicitly mentioned the second coming of Jesus.

The fourth letter (Thyatira) is more futuristic with a promise of the second coming in it. (Rev 2:25) The last four churches have mention of the second coming and all of them enter into the tribulation in some manner except Philadelphia. Rev 3:10 is very exciting for us.

Rev 3:11 The Lord promises to return while Philadelphia-type churches are still functioning, just as He had in the cases of Thyatira and Sardis. The Thyatira apostates, however, would be cast into the great tribulation (Rev 2:22) and Sardis would be caught unaware (3:3), while Philadelphia, faithfully watching and serving, would be kept from the coming hour of temptation. The implication here is that unbelieving men can yet infiltrate the true Church and spoil its testimony. In view of the situation with the world, the hypocrites and the heretics, no Christian can really relax. The testimony must be kept pure and forceful right up to the return of The King.

This is also an exciting verse to add on to 3:10. Notice we already have our crown. Shortly we'll put them on the glassy sea. The tribulation starts when the seven sealed book is opened. The seven sealed book can't be opened until the Lamb takes it in His hand. The Lamb doesn't take it in His hand until all these crowns are put on the glassy sea.

Rev 3:12-13 In the NIV or KJV three times the Lord says, "I will." It is the Divine initiative! This initiative guarantees that God will take the overcomer and make him a pillar. He will make him strong. See II Cor 12:9.

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. NASB

God's grace allows the affliction to work for us - not against us. Remember the definition of grace: the Divine influence upon our hearts AND its reflection in the life!

The overcomer will be identified forever with the Lord's invincible government. The overcomer is to be eternally identified with the new Jerusalem. Where he goes, to the furthest outposts of God's vast empire in space, he will be instantly recognized as a member of the kingdom of heaven. Why would it be necessary to identify the people in the Kingdom of Heaven if we are all in that Kingdom? Look at Eph 2:4-7.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to

come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. NASB

Verse 7 is the purpose of man. Could it be that the reference in Ephesians may indicate that after the 1,000 year reign of Jesus, there are ages to come where we might be sent as messengers of God and the identification will be to show from where we were sent? Food for thought.

Notice the phrase "My God." It is a possessive personal use of the phrase. Notice also Ps 22:1.

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?

Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. NASB

Here is God's Son becoming sin for us so that He could write upon us the name of His God and the name of the city of His God, which comes down from heaven from His God. Interesting climax to Ps 22:30-31.

30 Posterity will serve Him;

It will be told of the LORD to the coming generation.

31 They will come and will declare His righteousness

To a people who will be born, that He has performed it. NASB

Verse 31 reveals the prophetic nature of the Psalm. The overcomer will also be identified with the Lord's inherent glory.

It is also fascinating to see He will write upon us some un-revealed name. We saw this before in 2:17. In Rev 19:12 we see He has a name which no one knows but Himself and some feel this links to Jer 23:5-6. Revelation 19:12 reads:

And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. NASB

Jeremiah 23:4-5 reads:

5 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD,

"When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch;

And He will reign as king and act wisely

And do justice and righteousness in the land.

6 "In His days Judah will be saved,

And Israel will dwell securely;

And this is His name by which He will be called,

'The LORD our righteousness.' NASB

This is in contrast to what has been going on and is yet to come. The word "write" in this verse (12) is: grapho (graf-o); a primary verb; to "grave", especially to write; figuratively, to describe:...It means to engrave or write with a visible mark.

In 1 Kings 7:15-22 we find two pillars with specific names. 1 Kings 7:15-22

15 And he fashioned the two pillars of bronze; eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of both. 16 He also made two capitals of molten bronze to set on the tops of the pillars; the height of the one capital was five cubits and the height of the other capital was five cubits. 17 There were nets of network and twisted threads of chainwork for the capitals which were on the top of the pillars; seven for the one capital and seven

for the other capital. 18 So he made the pillars, and two rows around on the one network to cover the capitals which were on the top of the pomegranates; and so he did for the other capital. 19 And the capitals which were on the top of the pillars in the porch were of lily design, four cubits. 20 And there were capitals on the two pillars, even above and close to the rounded projection which was beside the network; and the pomegranates numbered two hundred in rows around both capitals. 21 Thus he set up the pillars at the porch of the nave; and he set up the right pillar and named it Jachin, and he set up the left pillar and named it Boaz. 22 And on the top of the pillars was lily design. So the work of the pillars was finished. NASB

The pillars are named “Jachin”, which means, “he shall establish” and “Boaz”, which means “in it is strength.” It is interesting that no where in scripture is anyone spoken of as a "pillar of the church."

We can compare this letter to Philadelphia, the sixth letter, to the sixth kingdom parable in Matt 13:45-46 which is the pearl of great price. Matt 13:45-46

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46 and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it. NASB

A pearl is a jewel from a living thing. It is removed from it's place of growth to become an item of adornment. Jesus is talking about Himself. He gave all of Himself to purchase the world. He bought the whole world so He could have us and take us out of it. We are His treasure. He only wants the treasure, not the whole thing. See also Heb 12:1-2 and notice the phrase “the joy set before Him” that is in verse 2. Heb 12:1-2

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NASB

What is that joy that caused Jesus to endure the cross? The church: us! That same aspect is suggested by the church at Philadelphia.

Scripture indicates that just before the end times, or Tribulation Period, there will be a weakening of many churches and indeed as we come to the final church we read of a problem all too apparent in modern Christianity. Look at what Paul says in 2 Thess 2:3

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, NASB

Next, we come to Laodicea.

The large liberal denominations come to mind. They bear the name Christian and indeed a cross appears on the steeples of the church buildings. They wouldn't be caught saying that they hate Jesus, but neither do they love Him. They wouldn't be caught doing no good works, but all of their works are in the flesh. They wouldn't be accused of saying the Bible is false, but they won't say that it is true either. Jesus would rather have them

admit to their lack of faith than to patronize the Gospel with some pretense of loyalty that has no real meaning. Indeed throughout the pages of the Gospel we never find the Lord in His earthly ministry criticizing an unbeliever. The Lord fraternized with sinners all the time and witnessed to them patiently. It was a different story in the Temple, however, where He found those lukewarm ones, the priests whose self-righteousness got the best of their ability to learn from the Messiah Himself. The Church acts today as if God hates sinners. God never hated sinners.

The city of Laodicea was formed by King Antiochus II who named it for his wife, Laodicea. Its position on the Meander River controlling the Lycus Valley gave it a profitable trade in various commercial items, including a special medicinal product, an eye ointment used widely throughout the Roman Empire. It also produced a unique rich, black wool that was an important part of a large flourishing garment industry. Black wool was a key offering of Laodicea and they were known all over the world for that. That is why getting white raiment as opposed to black is mentioned in verse 18. The city of Laodicea was so wealthy that, when it suffered massive damage in an earthquake in 60 AD, the Roman historian Tacitus says that it proudly refused the financial assistance of the emperor and chose to rebuild with its own resources.

We see in Rev 3:14-22 that Laodicea was a wealthy banking center. It was on a "by-road" and useful commercially, but very undependable militarily. Because of that, they tried to get along with everyone. About 6 miles away there were hot springs. There was an aqueduct from the hot springs to Laodicea. The water, by the time it got to Laodicea, was lukewarm. There stands the Lord of glory, the altogether lovely One, the chiefest among ten thousand, the One whom angels worship. There He stands, the marks of the nails in His hands, a look of love upon His face. And this church shrugs its shoulders and offers Him a lukewarm interest at best.

Laodicea was the church for which Paul had great conflict. Turn to Col 2:1

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,
NASB

Paul's concern is that they will be stressed and challenged by false doctrine. The name *Laodicea* means "judgment of the people" or "mob rule." To a democratic society, this sounds great, but who is supposed to be ruling the church? God - not the people. In 3:14 we find the one speaking is the ruler of God's creation - the preeminent One; the origin or source of creation. See Col 1:16-17.

16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. NASB

Instead of following its head, Jesus and His pastors, the Laodicean church followed the popular will of the laity. It represents the self-sufficient and self-satisfied church that is heading for spiritual disaster. John Stott said, "Probably the greatest tragedy of the church throughout its long and chequered history has been its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counter-culture." Our inward faith will always manifest itself in our "works." Unlike the church of

Philadelphia that was concerned with the need to evangelize a lost world, the Laodicean church was focused inward on its own needs and desires. As a result, the Laodiceans mistakenly believed they were almost perfect as a church. This picture mirrors the "prosperity gospel" of today with its "name it and claim it" mentality. It is utterly blinded to its true spiritual condition.

Philadelphia was to be removed before the tribulation, but there is no such promise to Laodicea. This is the apostate church out of which the Lord will call some individuals, because He watches over it in love; but the main stream flows on into the great Babylon.

Rev 3:14-16 There is an interesting touch in the way the KJV renders the Lord's introductory remarks: And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, as if to say that the church at Laodicea was not His, it was theirs; it was the church of the Laodiceans.

Because of its worldly success, the church had become indifferent to its real spiritual need. Doubting the absolute and unique authority of the Word of God, it had incorporated much of the humanistic philosophy of the intellectual world of that day.

Jesus also identifies Himself as the faithful and true Witness. He is the faithful witness, which means He will not dilute the truth; He is the true witness, which means He will not distort the truth. He sees through all the sham, the shallowness, the outward show of our lives. He neither dilutes nor distorts what He sees.

If you convert a "zealot," a "radical," one who is outspoken for his cause or beliefs, great things happen because he is on fire for the Lord. Not so with one who is lukewarm. Notice it doesn't say "change and I will not spit you out." God provides for some changes later on, but here we get the impression the decision has been made and the judgment handed down. The promises of God were not enough for her. She laid them aside to grasp at earthly power and dominion. It was marked by complete compromise. Not only was this dominion denied her, but she has irretrievably lost the high position to which God called her.

Rev 3:17 Here is a contrast with Smyrna (2:9). They thought they were poor, but God told them they were actually rich. Here is the reverse. You think your rich, but let me set you straight. The church at Laodicea was ignorant of its true condition. How easy and dangerous it is for us to get too comfortable.

Laodicea was a fashionable, worldly church, but it was powerless.

Thomas Aquinas once called upon Pope Innocent II. The Pope was counting a large sum of money. "You see, Thomas," said the Pope, "the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "True, holy Father," said Thomas, "and neither can it say to the lame any more, 'arise and walk.'" The church at Laodicea was popular, prosperous, pragmatic, polished, and proud. But it was powerless.

Rev 3:18 Jesus is contrasting here gold one would trade at a market place, a financial center. The church was destitute of anything of spiritual worth. He who is the "Wonderful Counselor" (Is 9:6) still loves this church in spite of its lukewarm accommodationism. See Is 55:1.

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost. NASB

The "waters" here is living water and refers to Jesus. You don't have any money and can't buy your redemption. The purchase price is merely to recognize their wretched condition and come to Him in repentance, forsaking their earthly riches and prestige for the true riches - their worldly wisdom for true wisdom. Look at Col 2:1-3

1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. NASB

True wisdom is in God. Jesus is not limited. All is found in Him. They must receive the pure white garments of His righteousness to replace the filthy rags of their own righteousness. Turn to Isa 64:6

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. NASB

As eye salve is needed for physical blindness, so their spiritual blindness must be cured by the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph 1:17-18). See James 1:5.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. NASB

In 1 Cor 12:8 Paul lists wisdom as a spiritual gift. Here, James tells us it is available to everyone who asks.

Rev 3:19 It is obvious that these lukewarm compromising Christians in Laodicea are indeed, Christians. Otherwise Jesus would not rebuke and chasten them. Look at Heb 12:5b-6.

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;
6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,
And He scourges every son whom He receives. " NASB

The purpose of receiving a rebuke is discipline and it should bring conviction. The motivation of discipline is love. It is for our good and this eliminates fear. See also 1 John 4:17-18.

17 By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. NASB

We are to be in this world as Jesus was in this world, and that is in love. As Christians we have nothing to fear of God involving punishment. Being perfected in His love casts out this fear. The Lord does not indicate what the chastening would be, but it would certainly include exposure of their spiritual poverty and nakedness to the worldly crowd whom they had been so anxious to impress. "That the shame of thy nakedness do appear" would certainly be among the worst chastisements for such a proud and intellectual church. But, Jesus loves them and desires their repentance!

We've heard this before. How can a church recapture its spiritual values, its spiritual virtues, and its spiritual vision? The answer is in a single word --repent!

Rev 3:20 What a beautiful promise. This verse is used often in witnessing to the lost and is here applied principally to the churches, which paradoxically contain some of the lost. If you understand the seven letters to the seven churches, and look at this promise we find it is placed in this letter where there is normally a promise to the church. The call of the Lord to Laodicea, then, is to come back to the Word of God. The poverty of this church lies in the fact that the Word of God is not given its proper place. The promise here is not to the group but to the individual. And this invitation is the narrowest in all the letters to the churches. In Thyatira there was a remnant (2:24); in Sardis there were a few names (3:4); but here it is: "if any man hear my voice." In such a materialistic church there must have been many unsaved members in the congregation. Also, notice where Jesus is making the promise from: outside. He's outside knocking to come in. This is a grim indictment. At this church, Jesus is outside the fellowship wanting to come in. The most joyous of all sacrifices was the peace-offering, or, as from its derivation it might also be rendered, the "offering of completion." Thus it symbolized the spiritual truth expressed in Rev 3:20. If, on the one hand, then, the "offering of completion" indicated that there was complete peace with God, on the other, it was also literally the offering of completeness. The peace-offerings were either public or private. The two lambs offered every year at Pentecost were a public peace-offering, and the only one which was regarded as "most holy."

Jesus makes three promises to those who open the door of their heart to Him. I will come in to him, He says. He enters the believer's heart and makes it His home. I will sup with him, He takes what we put at His disposal and, as He did with the loaves and fishes, blesses it, breaks it, multiplies it, and makes it a blessing to others. The word "sup" here is: deipneo (dipe-neh'-o); from 1173; to dine, i.e. take the principle (or evening) meal: KJV-- sup (X -er). The word also means communion. "And He with me" means He promises that, if we open our hearts to Him, He will open heaven to us.

This also fits the seventh kingdom parable in Matt 13:47-50.

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; 48 and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. 49 "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, 50 and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. NASB

It is the "dragnet," if you will, and it has a grim ending.

Rev 3:21-22 Here (Rev 3:21-22) the Lord says that at the present time He is not upon His own throne. He has, therefore, one purpose. He lives to make intercession for us. Turn to Heb 7:25

Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. NASB

The word intercession is "entunchano." It means, "to fall in with, meet with in order to converse. From this description of a casual encounter, the word progresses to the idea of pleading with a person on behalf of another, although at times the petition may be against another." The individual who, even in the midst of apostasy and lukewarmness, turns to Jesus and passes out of death and into life will be a part of that glorious company clothed in light that makes up the Bride which is the fullness of Him who "fillethe all in all" (Eph 1:22-23).

At this point, I would like to insert a section from Firstfruits of Zion's Torah Club, Volume 5 pertaining to what takes place at a blood sacrifice. It is based on Lev 1:5, but I believe that it really adds an insight into what Messiah's intercession means for us. Lev 1:5 reads:

'And he shall slay the young bull before the LORD; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting. NASB

How did sacrificing bring the Israelite near to God? How did the sacrifices work? A brief examination of the sacrificial blood ritual reveals the spiritual mechanics at work. Leviticus 1:5 describes the blood transaction. The offerer, not the priest, did the actual slaying of the animal. In order for it to be a kosher sacrifice, tradition tells us that the slaying had to be painless. The knife was sharpened to a razor fine blade. A single notch or jag in the blade made it invalid for sacrifice. After inspecting the knife, the offerer drew the blade across the animal's neck.

The priest's job was to catch the blood in a basin and splash it on the four sides of the altar. The rite of splashing blood onto the altar was the most essential and important part of the sacrifice, because the soul was contained in the blood.

In the Torah, blood contains the living soul of a creature. Whether human or animal, we all possess a living essence. The Torah refers to this life-force as our "nefesh." We translate it as "soul," but it does not necessarily mean the eternal spiritual/soul. Rather it is simply the spark of life which animates our flesh. This

soul can be said to be contained within the blood, because when one's blood is spilled from his body, his life leaves with it.

Lev 17:11

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' NASB

Thus it was the animal's soul which the priests applied to the altar. However, because of the laying on of hands, the blood/soul was not identified as the animal's but as the offerer's.

Watch the whole process. The worshipper selected a kosher, unblemished animal. Then, through the laying on of hands, the worshipper invested his identity onto the animal. Once the animal was legally recognized as bearing the worshipper's identity, it was slaughtered in order to draw out the soul with the blood. The blood/soul of the animal was caught by the priest. However, the blood/soul was no longer recognized as the animal's soul, but as the worshipper's soul. The priest then carried the blood/soul to the altar and applied it there.

Altars were regarded as touching points between Heaven and Earth. For this reason they were often built at high elevations. An altar is like a gate, a sort of mystical portal between the realm of man and the realm of the divine. Whatever touches the altar is Holy to God and enters His Presence. Through the altar the sacrifices ascend in smoke to God. Thus, through the medium of the korban's blood, the offerer's soul was brought into the presence of God. It was as if the offerer's soul was splashed onto the altar and into the Presence of God. In short, the soul of the worshipper was brought near to God. The problem with holiness was overcome.

Through the mechanism of the sacrificial blood, the animal was 'brought near' to God on behalf of the offerer.

It is important to point out that the death of the animal was not the purpose of sacrifice. The korban (offering) is about life; not death. The sacrifice was about the life and soul of the animal. The death of the animal was only the means by which the blood/soul was procured for use in the blood ritual.

The situation of every man is the same as that of the Israelites. We all desire to 'draw near' to God. Yet our sin and our uncleanness cut us off from communion and fellowship with Him. We are unable to approach the Holy God. Just as Moses was unable to enter the Tabernacle, we too are unable to enter into God's presence. He is holy; we are common. He is immortal; we are mortal. He is pure; we are impure. He is righteousness; we are sin. We cannot come near to God without a korban (something brought near) in our stead.

The Torah tells the Israelite to bring an unblemished animal for a korban. Through the korban, the offerer is vicariously brought into the presence of God. The Master is our korban. He is the unblemished, perfect and sinless one that brings us near and into the presence of God. No man comes to the Father except through Yeshua.

When we lay our hands on Messiah, we identify ourselves with Him. By confessing His Name and entering His salvation, we become completely identified with Him, so much so that we have died with Him and risen with Him. He is the perfect, unblemished man. His blood is the atonement that is taken to the altar for us. Son of God and Son of Man, His blood carries in it the “nefesh” (life force) of God and man. He is able to carry our souls to the altar, and through His blood, we are brought near to God. His blood stands in our stead.

The goal is to ‘draw near’ to God – not in the temporal and flesh bound sense of entering the earthly Tabernacle, but in the eternal sense of entering the eternal Tabernacle.

Remember that to ‘draw near’ is to have arrived at a goal. To ‘draw near’ to God is to enter into communion with God. It implies entering His very presence. In as much as His presence resided in the Tabernacle on Earth, the worshipper was able to draw near and enter into that presence through the offering of a korban – something brought near.

The writer of the book of Hebrews explains this while speaking of ‘drawing near’ to God. Though the worshipper was able to draw near to God within the Temple on Earth through means of the sacrificial blood of animals, such blood never availed to bring him near to God in the eternal, soterological sense.

Though the blood of the bull allowed him to draw near in the earthly Tabernacle, it did not avail him the same privilege in the true Tabernacle in Heaven.

Heb 10:1-2

1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? NASB

Heb 7:19

(for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. NASB

Heb 7:25

Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. NASB

Heb 4:16

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. NASB

Heb 10:22

let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. NASB

All of this presents a very different interpretation of sacrifice. The traditional interpretations tell us that the death of the sacrifice atones for the sinner. However, in the Torah we see that it is not the death, but the life – the soul and the blood of the animal – which atone for the sinful man and bring him close to God. Alfred Edersheim points out, “The death of the sacrifice was only a means towards an end, that the end being the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, by which the atonement was really made.” The death of the animal accomplished nothing for the man. In the animal’s death, there was no atonement or communion. Those things were in the life, the blood of the animal. Sacrifice is about life, not death!

It is true that the Master took on Himself the punishment for our sin, i.e. death. However, He accomplished more than that. He is more than a scapegoat for us. More than simply taking our punishment, Yeshua brings us into the presence of His Father. That is a function of His life! The death of Yeshua would have availed us nothing had He not risen to life. It is in His rising, His conquering over death, that we are atoned for and brought near to God. Only in rising did He enter the heavenly sanctuary with His blood to make atonement for us. Had Yeshua not risen, He would have been as a sacrifice slaughtered but not brought to the altar. His death was a means toward an end, that end being the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, by which atonement was really made. It is the life/soul of the sacrifice that brings us near.

His throne is about to be established. His kingdom is about to begin. We will see Him take His throne shortly.

Notice again that all seven of the promises to the overcomers involve features that are mentioned again in the description of the ages to come, where all will be fulfilled. Thus, the tree of life was promised at Ephesus: Rev 2:7

'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.'
NASB

Rev 22:2

And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. NASB

Deliverance from the second death at Smyrna: Rev 2:11

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.' NASB

Rev 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. NASB

The new name written at Pergamos: Rev 2:17

'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.' NASB

Rev 22:4

and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. NASB

The morning star to the Thyatirans: Rev 2:28

and I will give him the morning star. NASB

Rev 22:16

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." NASB

White raiment to the church at Sardis: Rev 3:5

'He who overcomes shall 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. NASB

Rev 19:8

And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. NASB

The new Jerusalem to the Philadelphians: Rev 3:12

'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 upon 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. NASB

Rev 21:2

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. NASB

Finally a sharing of His throne at Laodicea: Rev 3:21

‘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.’ NASB

Rev 20:4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. NASB

In the seven letters we don't see world wide conversion. We do see apostasy. If you took these seven churches in any other order, they wouldn't fit history.

Ephesus tried doctrines to see if they were sound, but they left their first love.

Smyrna - we find persecution and we are reminded He is the one that has victory over death.

Pergamum - we find the marriage to the world.

Thyatira - we have Jezebel and idolatry. There are thousands of idolatries in this world today.

Sardis - a church in name only: denominationalism.

Philadelphia - the church that "hung in there" and looked for one thing: the second coming.

Laodicea - self sufficient, apostasy.

Every one of these letters are written to the angels of the church and "he who has an ear." Are you an addressee?

All of the seven churches are in Asia. As mentioned at the beginning of the study of the churches, the word Asia means "mire." The first letter is to Ephesus which means the "admired one" or "darling." Smyrna meant "myrrh." Pergamum is one that means "perverted" as in a mixed marriage. Thyatira means "continual sacrifice" and we have Jezebel introducing false worship and idolatry. Sardis means "remnant" or "escaping ones." Philadelphia means "city of brotherly love." Laodicea means "rule of the people."

Comparison of the seven letters with the seven kingdom parables in Matt 13:

CHURCH

PARABLE

Ephesus	Sower
Smyrna	Tares
Pergamum	The mustard seed
Thyatira	Hidden treasure
Sardis	Hidden treasure
Philadelphia	Pearl of great price
Laodicea	The net

Also, Paul wrote 13 letters that he signed. Three are duplicate addressees (first and second to the same addressee). That means there are ten addressees. Three of those are pastors. That means Paul wrote seven churches. Is there a relationship between the seven letters Paul wrote and the seven letters Jesus dictated?

The first letter in Revelation 2 is to Ephesus. Paul also wrote to them.

The second letter is to Smyrna. The theme of Smyrna's letter is the suffering church. The central theme of Philippians is joy through suffering.

Pergamum refers to the church being married to the world. Corinthians is the worldly church.

Thyatira refers to religious externalism and idolatry. Paul's letter to the Galatians deals with the same subject.

Sardis had nothing good said of it and has the same theme as Romans.

Philadelphia deals with the rapture and second coming. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians has the same message.

Laodicea is the last letter in Revelation. The last letter Paul wrote is Colossians. Colossai was a suburb of Laodicea. Also, the title of Jesus as God's ruler over creation occurs only twice in scripture: Colossians and the letter to Laodicea.